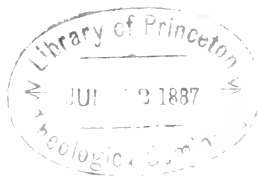




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FIVE

# BRITISH PULPIT:

A COLLECTION OF

## SERMONS

BY

THE MOST EMINENT DIVINES

OF THE PRESENT DAY.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

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VOL. V.

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# THE BRITISH PULPIT.

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## THE NEW COMMANDMENT.

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REV. J. M. RODWELL, A.M.

ST. SEPULCHRE'S CHURCH, SKINNER STREET, NOVEMBER 29, 1835.

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"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."—JOHN, xiii. 34.

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THE religion of Jesus, is the religion of love, love in its origin, love in its manifestation, love in its fruit. It sprang out of the infinite compassion of the divine mind: it was wrought out amid benevolence unexampled, and self-denial unequalled: and its effect is peace in the sinner's bosom, the peaceable fruit of righteousness in his life and conversation, the smile of a reconciled God, the sight of his face in glory, the embrace of his everlasting love. And this free, this full, this everlasting salvation which God has provided for his fallen creatures, is set before us in the text, as the Christian's model in providing for the wants and in exercising affection towards his fellow men: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." In that memorable night when divine love, and infernal malice had each their perfect work, these solemn words were spoken. In that night when Jesus was betrayed into the hands of those who thirsted for his blood, and the wondrous scheme of man's redemption was brought to its accomplishment—when nothing now remained of his stupendous undertaking, but to be led like a sheep to the slaughter, and to make his life a sacrifice for sin; in that trying hour, when the powers of darkness were about to display on him their last and utmost effort, this solemn charge was given to those disciples whose loyalty remained as yet unshaken, to "love one another as he had loved them." From all eternity he had loved his own, and "having loved them, he loved them unto the end." And now when he was about to manifest that strength of love, which should throw into the shade every other display of Jehovah's goodness; when Calvary was about to exhibit the master-piece of heavenly compassion, he proclaimed this to be the pattern, this the stimulus, this the security for our love to man, that in the view—the believing view—of his cross, we should behold a *new* commandment, and feel

the force of a novel argument, and be led by the new and constraining influence of the love of Christ, to "love one another as he hath loved us."

But not merely in setting before men an example of heavenly love did the life and the death of Jesus give unto men "a new commandment." From first to last, the Gospel is in one point of view "a new commandment." I speak not merely of the doctrines, for they were never heard of, till they flowed under the teaching of the Spirit, from the lips of inspired men; I speak not merely of its novelty as a religion of love, to the heathen nations of the Saviour's age, when, through the prevalence of luxury, the wants of all were greater than the means of any, and men were selfish upon principle; I speak not of its novelty to his Pharisaic hearers, who were taught to evade the fifth commandment with untroubled conscience, and to defraud an aged parent of that support which by the laws of God and nature was his due: but the moral duties of the Gospel are, from the peculiar manner in which they are stated, "a new commandment." The Gospel leaves not the moral duties to the power of nature; it does not bid us by our natural strength to comply with its high requirements; neither, like the law of Moses, does it merely present us with a pure and peaceful code, and then thunder into our ear the threatenings against sin, declaring that he is cursed who continueth not in all its words to do them, and that God will by no means clear the guilty: but the Gospel while it places before us the highest standard of moral duty, it gives them on a basis, and regulates them by a pattern, divine, unchanging, and infinite.

The Jew, indeed, had a code of morality both clear and pure: his duty was clearly set before him; the way of holiness was so plain, that the wayfaring man though a fool could not err therein. But we do not find that the better knowledge of the Jew secured to him a better practice: we do not find that his clearer light led him to follow in the path it pointed out; nor did the abstract beauty of holiness lead him to make and to copy for himself the bright and the beautiful that was set before him. In short, the Jewish religion was not a system of motives, and it left human nature in much the same predicament as the very ignorance of heathenism itself.

A religion without motives is of no avail to change the heart and to purify the practice. It is of no avail that you tell a man his duty; but you must tell him *how* to do it, and you must give him a *power* to do it. It is of no avail that you set before the pilgrim the pathway unless you give him the staff to support his journeyings, the bread to support his strength, and the home which is ready to receive him when the toil is over. And it is this which Christianity professes to do: it has risen not merely with *truth*, but with *healing* in its wings: it has not merely poured a flood of light over the whole region of morals, but with cheering radiance it sends out a quickening warmth. With one hand it tears asunder every flimsy veil of delusion and self-deceit, unveils the subterfuges of the human heart, detects unsuspected errors, effectually humbling pride, convincing of moral weakness where the plague of the natural heart is deeply and really felt, by the Spirit's agency—and then with the other it pours into the empty vessel of the human heart, a principle, a power, and a motion, by the constant exercise of which, morality shall assume its loftiest tone, and moral agents become "followers of God as dear children."

And here is the great difference between the religion of Jesus and every other: it is a system of motives; and it is this which is its constant witness proving

that *is* of God; because not only does it tell us of him, but leads us to him: it not only tells how deeply man has fallen, and how sorely he has rebelled, but it professes (what no false religion would ever venture to do) to have for every believer a power which shall replace him who made the heart, on the heart which by nature hates him; a power by which man may regain what he lost, and repair the breaches which sin has made, and gain a security, a permanency, and a love for active and steady holiness. It tells us of a constraining love, which shall make obedience easy, delightful, natural, in a manner unavoidable. (2 Cor. v. 14.)

And it is in the motive which it supplies, more than in the duties it teaches, that the Gospel in general, and the text in particular, is a new commandment. We affirm not that man is ignorant of duty. You may cull the flowers of almost a Christian morality, from the ethics of Greece and Rome, from the Koran of Mahomet: the lawgiver of the Jews propounded in the decalogue, the whole of the will of God. But whether it be the Jew, whether it be the heathen, whether it be the nominal Christian, all are alike in this; they know their duty but they cannot do it. To affirm that all that is lovely and of good report, has been utterly rooted out of human nature, would assuredly be to outstep the limits of the truth. A distinction is to be drawn between man in his relation to God, and man in his subordinate capacity, in the social ties of this lower world. And very probably in this subordinate capacity a man may have attained to eminence in moral sympathy, in tender affection, in devoted usefulness. The page of classic antiquity sparkles with much that is bright and beautiful: the strength of filial piety and maternal love, the constancy of tried friendship and unbending fidelity, the stern devotedness of patriotism, pour a very flood of glory over the memory of Greece and Rome: and we know that these, and the sense of honour, and the pride of integrity, and the hatred of the low and the unworthy artifice, can exist even now in bosoms that are totally unfurnished with the love of God. Men do what is right and proper, not because they love it for its intrinsic worth, or love God its author, but because they are ashamed of what is wrong. They will do a kind and benevolent action, not because they are grateful for mercies vouchsafed to them, but because it would be pain and grief to a natural softness of disposition to suppress the risings of affection. Our noblest motives are too often a law, a base, a shifting expediency; our best constraint to consistent virtue, the customs and the fashions of a world which lieth in wickedness.

Yes, my brethren, this is the condition in which Christianity finds men; so debased, so revolted, that either they know not their God, or if they do know him, that knowledge is no motive to become like him in holiness, benevolence, and love. This is the moral leprosy, this the spiritual disease which the Gospel undertakes to heal. It points out the secret cause of all sin—ignorance of Him who is all purity; it strikes at the root of the disease; it fastens on the primary element of all depravity: the Spirit convinces men of sin, because they believe not; and chiefest of this, that man's is an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. It offers, through Christ, to bring us to such a knowledge of God, as shall overcome the tendencies of nature, and lead us to copy his perfections as seen in the face of his beloved Son; it offers to introduce us to fellowship and communion with the offended Lawgiver, whose very attributes pledge him to the destruction of all that is sinful; and so to reconcile us to our

offended Father, that the Lord God shall dwell once more with rebellious man, when he has become, through the Spirit, a temple and an habitation of God. And then, when the work of Christ is seen in all its fulness, embraced in all its freeness, and felt in all its power; when the fallen, humbled, mourning soul is raised from the dust, and united once more to Him in whom alone our frail spirits can find repose and rest; then old things will pass away—old joys, and hopes, and fears, and ambitions. In the place of the weeds of sin shall spring up the flowers of holiness, the growth of Paradise. The man of renewed soul will prove that he has got a security for his holiness; that his morality is got upon the proper basis; that he is not led to it merely because it is expedient, or because custom authorizes or laws enjoin; but now he has awakened up to the dignity of his nature as an immortal being; he is now broken off the old, natural, and corrupt tree; he is now walking in the light of eternity: he is no longer a branch of that vine of earth whose roots are fed in the soil of this polluted world, over whose stem the axe of wrath is uplifted, whose clusters are ripe for the wine-press of the wrath of God; but he is grafted a living branch upon Christ the living vine; in his regenerate soul a stream is springing up, fed by the eternal fountain of truth, and holiness, and love. The chariot wheels no longer, like those of the Egyptians, drive heavily; but the soul soars, like the chariots in prophetic vision, upon wheels and upon wings: and O, how delightful an evidence is it of the complete and unrestrained influence of the divine love on our hearts, when the whole dream of thoughts, desires, motives, affections, and actions, are carried towards God in an undivided current! O that we could truly love God, ourselves, and others, because *he* hath loved us!

See here then the motive of my text, see the fountain from which the streams of duty are to flow in the bosom and the life of a Christian—even from the love of God in Christ; not from the example merely, for the example is utterly useless till the Spirit applies it, and brings it home into our hearts; but from a sense and experience of the work of Christ in bringing back the soul to God. “This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you;” “I give unto you a new commandment, that ye love one another:” not *new* to your bosoms, for it was planted there by nature’s God, though, perhaps, too often dormant; not *new* in the letter even, for it was written by the finger of God in the tables of the Jewish law: but I call it *my commandment*, and a *new commandment*, because it is fixed upon a basis, and regulated by a pattern which never was known before—even my love to sinners which has never been paralleled—my love which is peculiar and infinite. It is a mistake to think that Christ came to add to the laws of God in the Mosaic covenant; he came to sanction them afresh, to develop their spirit, to beat out that massive golden wedge of divine truth into all its extensive bearings. Neither did Christ come to create the social affections, but to measure them by a new standard, to give them the impulse of a new, and noble, and surer stimulus—even that eternal love which an offended God can manifest to his rebellious creatures.

It is, however, difficult and rare to find pure and disinterested love: the word is little understood and can rarely be manifested. The affairs of men are so intimately associated, the tie of mutual influence is so unbroken, that we question whether it be possible for any to perform a benevolent or charitable action from which he does not receive (as it were in a reflex manner) some

reciprocal benefit. Our dependence upon *others* for assistance and for comfort, necessarily involves selfishness with our love. To find the purity of disinterested love, we must seek for it in the development of circumstances which relate to some other, some higher nature than our own. This has only been manifested in the love of Christ, and whether you consider its disinterestedness, or the objects on which it was exercised, you shall find that none other can be likened to the love of Christ.

For the Second Person in the glorious Trinity is fully blessed in all the unutterable perfections which are eternal and infinite in God. The glory of the Deity is capable neither of increase nor of diminution from external circumstances, and, therefore, when man fell, it was not that the happiness of the Creator was lowered, nor the harmonies of creation disarranged, nor the majesty of God sullied by the defection of his intelligent creatures. These were not the motions which led the Son of God to lay aside the mantle of uncreated glory, and take upon him the veils of flesh. Had it been that the justice of God alone were to be satisfied, one word would have sufficed to vindicate it; the breath of that word would have hurled the sin-struck planet from its little sphere; and then, crushed and dissolved, its very place blotted out, the glory and the blessedness which surrounds the throne of God would still remain unclouded. But it was love, unutterable love, which brought Jesus from his throne on high, when nothing here could add to his essential bliss. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," to the end "that whosoever believeth should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Behold what manner of love is this, that we should be called the children of God." Sure, indeed, it is, that the *bounty* and the *compassion* of the Creator were manifested in his material handy work. Who can look upon himself, so fearfully and wonderfully made—upon the works of beauty and goodness which fill this lower globe—or upwards upon the starry palaces of a magnificent universe, without feeling that God is good?

The waving corn, the green pasture, ocean with its countless waves, and earth with her ten thousand tongues, proclaim a God of *power*. The crimson beams of morning, the purple shades of evening, the gale which breathes its freshness around the dwellings of the rich and poor, the gracious rain which drops on our fields the smiling promise of abundance, tell me of the finger of unwearied *providence*. But for a demonstration of infinite *love*, to know that God can be just to himself and merciful to the sinner—to know that he can pardon, love, and save, the very creatures who desired not the knowledge of his ways, who had insulted the majesty of his perfections, and blackened the canopy of heaven by the incense of their abomination—you need to be told of the incarnation of Him, who, though he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet took on him the form of a servant—you need to be told of love which, infinite in its comprehension, can embrace its enemies—of his atoning death and sufferings. And you need not only to be *told*, but to *know*, by a real reception of that Saviour into your hearts, the riches of that grace which he sendeth down from his present seat of glory. O! how shall we calculate this love? By what arithmetic shall we estimate the humiliation of Jesus from his rude cradle in the manger, to his last bitter baptism of tears and blood? Shall we compare it to the monarch who would lay aside the splendour of his royalty, that he might go, and by entreaty, by argument, and by love, win back the

affections and the loyalty of rebellious subjects? Shall we liken it to that generous feeling which led the great philanthropist to bury himself amid the outcasts of his race in the gloomy and pestilential dungeon? Such comparisons will not stand before the subject of our meditation. We might, indeed, conceive a tribe of living creatures, the most vile and despicable of all that fill the ranks of creation; we may suppose each individual of that despised race, writhing beneath the grasp of an agonizing disease, which consumed and preyed upon the species to its destruction. Were it possible for man to lay aside his immortality and his dignity, to come down to their puny and despised nature, and that amid torment, infirmity, and woe, to save and to rescue the ephemeral race, that would be some faint shadow of the love we speak of. But O! it were useless and weak to pretend lightly to draw an analogy between man in any situation, and the incarnate Godhead; for the greatest distance between man, and the lowest of God's creatures, is even as nothing compared with the infinity which separates man from his Maker. And when to this we add the consideration, that the love of Christ, in reconciling them to God, was manifested to a world who rejected him when he came among them, and ever since have been trampling under foot the offers of his grace—tell me if this be not the disinterested purity of unequalled love? Does not so bright an example throw an irresistible sanction upon the command, that we love, as he hath loved us? Is not the spirit of the law illustrated and developed in a noble transcript in the character of Jesus Christ? Time forbids me to enlarge upon this subject. There may be some here to whom it would seem little better than foolishness, and the raving of enthusiasm to speak of that peace and joy in a sense of the love of Christ, which it is the believer's lot to feel, and of the motive it is within him to all that is right, and high, and holy. To such I would say, that if these glad tidings are not tidings of great joy to you, if they never produce a faith working by love, then is this Gospel hid; and if it be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. Such persons have yet to ask the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" They have not yet found peace with God; they have yet to receive into their hearts that great salvation; that full and finished work which satisfies the infinitely holy mind of the great Jehovah, and leaves the ransomed sinner no cause to fear. O! that every one of you here present may know, in vital, heartfelt reception of the truth, *all* that is meant by *the constraining of the love of Christ*. Yes, and if the Lord were in every heart before me, "mighty to save," and then the felt preciousness of a saving faith, would make you anxious to impart to others the power, the peace, the treasure you have found yourselves; you would not be content to go to heaven alone; you would long to take others with you; you would act towards the poor brethren, whose cause I plead this day, in the spirit of Moses to Hobab, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good, for we are journeying unto the land, of which the Lord hath said, I will give it thee."

There are, I trust, others here who know something of the love of God, as brought home to a sin-convinced conscience, through the Spirit of Jesus; who have been brought to feel the suitableness there is in this precious application of redeeming blood, and that inward disease whose soreness and malignity has been revealed to them; who have been brought to know that the doctrines of the cross can let down upon the trembling soul the light of God's reconciling countenance: and call forth love out of hatred, zeal out of indifference, loyalty

out of rebellion and command not only reverence but devotion to an offended God. May I not indulge the hope that my words are finding a responsive echo in the bosoms of many around me, when I affirm that wherever a man has been really touched with a sense of the reality and the magnitude of eternal things; wherever the question of a man's state before God has been made a matter of earnest, homefelt inquiry, then of that man we are sure it is true, that peace is upheld in his bosom solely by faith in the blood, and by dependance on the Spirit, of his Saviour; that he prizes and values every intimation which recalls him crucified to his mind—his dying love, his purifying doctrines, his soul-sustaining influences. O, yes! there is an inward witness, there is a beam of gladness that enters with the name of Jesus: there is the thrilling pulse of immortality high beating in the believer's bosom; for he knows of One who hath saved him, saved him from the dominion and misery of sin, given peace to a guilty conscience, enabled him to love holiness, smoothed down the thorny paths of life, taken the sting out of death, victory from the grave, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers; while a sense of these blessings he has himself received, will lead him to set no limits to his deeds of charity and labours of love.

O let your love, my Christian brethren, this day imitate, so far as mortal frailty can, the love of Jesus. Imitate his love for souls. View him in eternity covenanting to die for his guilty church: view him in the fulness of time, putting off the crown of glory and the empire of Deity, that he might stoop to the manger, the cross, the grave, for you: view this, believe in this, and be niggard this day if you can. Behold Immanuel, God with us: behold him from his rude cradle in Bethlehem to his last bitter baptism of tears and blood: view him bearing his burden of guilt to the summit of Calvary, and casting it from his ransomed people with all the energies of Deity; then rising from that grave which could not detain its noble prisoner to his throne of primal glory, that he might send forth his Spirit, and exalt his people to the fellowship of his own immortal dignity: behold this masterpiece of love, and O! if this Saviour is yours, I know that the review of his work and the sight of his cross is my surest motive to keep your hearts generous and warm.

Permit me, as one who would desire to know nothing among you but Christ Jesus and him crucified, to make this my only argument, for urging you to much liberality this day, in the cause of Him who hath done so much for you, and who, we trust, is working in many of you to the salvation of your immortal souls. Assist your ministers in leading the little ones of their flock to Jesus. Assist us in imparting to our poorer brethren those glorious truths which God of his goodness hath provided for the poor, which alone can bind them to duty, morality, and subjection here; which teach how even the poorest and the meanest of them, when their course is run, may move off from this passing scene, and grasp destinies of unbounded splendour—infinity their life-time, eternity their home, God their patron. Be not weary in well-doing. Ye are now called in this your day to the exercise of faith, and hope, and love. But faith has her appointed age; hope lasteth only for a season. Both shall be swallowed up, faith in sight and hope in joy: but love *never* faileth; love will abide for ever; for God is love, and ye in him if ye are baptizec into his Spirit.

## ON VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN THE CHURCH.

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REV. J. RUDGE, D.D.

HAWKCHURCH, DORSET.

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“ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”—COLOS. iii. 15.

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THERE is scarcely any aspect in which the religion of Jesus Christ can be viewed, but has a tendency to inspire joy and gratitude in the soul. The very name by which it is designated intimates the kind of feeling which it should enkindle. It is a perfect system of joyful intelligence. How sweet, for instance, and how enrapturing the meditation which is employed on the most astonishing of all the astonishing mercies of God—that of the redemption of the human soul from ruin and perdition, by the atonement and satisfaction of the Son of God; and how calculated is it, notwithstanding the oppressive burden of sin which rendered such a marvellous economy of grace indispensable, to awaken obedience to that precept of our Lord, by which we are enjoined to be of “good cheer!” I cannot, therefore, but think that it is raising a prejudice against religion, to represent any portion of its spirit as morose, or any part of its character as cheerless, and that it has here in this world of discord and confusion no enjoyments to administer, but such as are distant in prospect, and of which the fruition will alone be realized in another and future state of existence.

It is lamentable to add, however, that there is scarcely any prejudice which has been more generally prevalent, nor one to the influence of which many are discouraged from entertaining the Christian doctrines, and entering on a religious life. When a sinner is awakened to a consideration of his ways, and thinks, perhaps, seriously of changing the current of his thoughts, and the conduct of his life, he is often disheartened by these apprehensions, and trembles like a poor traveller who is passing into the frightful deserts of Arabia, or traversing the scorching sands of Numidia. All his delights he believes must then terminate; a final adieu must be bidden to every joyous hour; and nought but scenes of sadness and sorrow, of continual disquietude and difficulty, must be encountered. Any system of human opinions, or any scheme of worldly doctrine, which gives encouragement to such a prejudice, and which, by scattering thorns and briars in the path-way of the frail and penitent, impedes their approach to that God who is ever ready with open arms to receive them, must be founded in error, and be productive of mischief: in error, because true religion is founded in good intelligence to man; and of mischief because its object is to win *all*, not to discourage *any*—to embrace the gladsome tidings of grace and salvation communicated in the gospel of Jesus Christ



Religion, then, is not to be regarded as a sad and melancholy business, which discountenances all joyous thoughts, and considers every effusion of mirth and every transport of delight, as inconsistent with the gravity of its character. and the sacredness of its profession. Joy is as true a part of religion as sorrow, nay it is its more excellent part, and that which, as it is most heavenly, is also more suitable to such souls as are best refined and purified from their gross and baser lusts. Sorrow is a necessary initiatory duty, and often the fittest commencement of a holy life. But "perfect love," as the Apostle says, "casteth out fear;" and as we grow in grace, we go on towards a higher state of joy and praise, and become more transported with the excellences and beauties of holiness. The very spirit, to which we are indebted for all our advancement in holiness, is a spirit of comfort, and will never be wanted to aid our progress, and to perfect our growth, in the divine life.

When the Apostle speaks of singing to the Lord, he is not to be understood as strictly confining his direction to *vocal* music only, which is indeed a chief portion of this department of public worship, but extending it also to *instrumental* music, in conjunction with vocal, the one in subserviency and assistance to the other. Now this appears from the several words which the Apostle employed in recommending this precept, viz. "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Psalms, as it is well known, are those divine compositions which were set and sung to instruments of various kinds in the Jewish church, and of which a great part of their public worship consisted. The adoption of their psalms is, in the first place, recommended by Saint Paul. He then mentions hymns and spiritual songs, that is, compositions, either immediately inspired or dictated by the Spirit; a thing frequent in all the parts of the public worship in those early times\*, as one of the Fathers has recorded; or they were such as consisted of some divine matter taken from the Scriptures, or of a religious character composed by holy men.

If we consult the earliest records which have reference to the worship paid to the Supreme Being, we shall find that music constituted a prominent feature in all religious services. In all the accounts still extant, of heathen devotions †, music was introduced, and songs were sung in honour of their deities, and these were esteemed as the sublimest and most excellent part of their sacred rites. And though this, as well as every other portion of their religious services, were idolatrous, and were abused to a wrong end, yet there can be no more reason against the *use* of this method of glorifying the true God than their profane orations can be brought forward as arguments against preaching the Gospel, or their praying to many gods, against our praying to the one true God. In this matter the sense of nature is plainly discerned, and an evident demonstration is afforded, that, in the judgment of mankind the exercise is an honourable one ‡, and to the glory of God, to have our tongues set to his praise, and tuned in grateful accents with songs of joy and thanksgiving.

Nor has the Almighty shown any dislike towards this exercise in any of the revelations of his will with which he has favoured us—nothing inconsistent with the most spiritual homage, and the most elevated devotional feelings by which we can be transported and inspired. In the earliest records of the ante-

\* See Tertul. Apol. c. 39.

† See Plutarch, Sympos. Quest. 5.

‡ See Homer's Iliad, l. v. 472, cited by Plutarch on Music.

diluvian world, we read of instrumental music as being among the first of arts in which mankind were instructed\*; and the mention of the harp and organ plainly intimates that those were instruments, with the use and "handling" of which there were those amongst its inhabitants who, after their father Jubal, were well acquainted. Such instruments, therefore, existed in the earliest ages of the world; and a doubt cannot exist as to the purpose to which they would be appropriated; that the strings of the one would be swept, and the notes of the other would be touched as sweet and inspiring accomplishments of social worship, or of public devotion; that they would be used, not so much as a human science to charm the ear and gratify the taste, but would be cultivated as a more than human art of raising up to heaven's God the minds, aspirations, and musings, and tutoring the ear, as it were, to that music, instrumental and vocal, in which celestial agents are employed; the song of Moses and the Lamb, in all probability, forming chiefly that divine hymn, to which all their harps were tuned, and which all their voices united as one, in singing, to the honour, and praise, and the glory of Him who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever! With respect to the introduction of vocal and instrumental music into the service of the temple below, it was doubtless its excellency, the influence it produced, and the admirable purposes it answered, by which it was first suggested, and which, probably, may be the reason why *this*, of the very few things mentioned relative to the antediluvian world, has been recorded. Our knowledge of the characters that appeared, as well as of the arts and sciences that obtained, are very defective. All other grades are absorbed in that great one which swept every thing away, as it were, in the mighty flood. We collect from the early invention of this art, however, an argument in favour of its practical utility; and that as men were first inspired by the Almighty himself with the knowledge of it, it is both agreeable to reason, and consistent with the soundest views of religion, that He would be well pleased, whenever it should be appropriated as a portion of his service, and in celebration of his praise and mercies. And that Moses meant by recording the early origin and invention of music to intimate that this was the purpose to which it should be consecrated, namely, the honour of God, is, I think, clear, from this single consideration, that he himself was thoroughly accomplished as a master of this divine science, and made an eminent use of it in extolling the divine perfections. As he was instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians, he excelled particularly in this sublime art. Witness, for instance, his compositions in the book of Psalms, of some of which he was the author†, as well as the first composer of sacred hymns; and I would more especially direct your attention to his song, in the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy, which is one of the sublimest as well as the most ancient, if not the most ancient, pieces of poetry and hymns of praise ever composed in the world.

But not to insist on these remote intimations of the general practice and utility of this divine science, when the Almighty had established his church, and settled his people in the promised land, we find that music was introduced into his worship with extraordinary pomp and variety; and a singular occasion is recorded, in the sixteenth chapter of the first book of Chronicles, on which David, who received the appellation, and who deserved the character of being

\* See the heathen notion of the origin of Music in Plut.

† See Lightfoot, Hammond, and Patrick, in corroboration of this point. See also Bp. Gray's Key, p. 266.

a man after God's own heart, is described as having ordained a choir to sing a psalm of thanksgiving to the God of Israel, and enjoining Jeiel with his instruments of psalteries\* and harps, Asaph with his cymbals, and Benaiah and Jahaziel with their trumpets to join in this psalm of praise and thanksgiving. Whatever had previously been the worship of the Jews in the ambulatory and unsettled state in which they subsisted, when their church became fixed and fully established, God inspired the sweet singer of Israel to introduce music into its service, for the double purpose of rendering it more sublime and impressive, and causing his praises to be more perfect and glorious among the people.

The vocal and instrumental music thus introduced, constituted, I may add, no part of those carnal ordinances, none of those beggarly elements by which the Almighty was forced to discipline the Jewish people at first. These were well suited to the time in which they were ordained, but were to be laid aside, or abrogated, when the church should have attained a more perfect state and form. They were expressly designed to spiritualize that gross and carnalized people, and to prepare their minds for the introduction of a better and more heavenly dispensation; for as God then began to open a clearer prospect of the reign of the Messiah, and raised up David, not only as a type to prefigure, but as a prophet to reveal him, so we find that the allusions and matter contained in his psalms possess a more spiritual character, and breathe a purer and more heavenly strain, than are to be discovered in any compositions or revelations existing at that period. And there cannot be a doubt, that the introduction of these psalms into the ordinary service of the temple, of which a portion was sung every day in the week † throughout the year, was expressly designed by the Almighty to raise and elevate the views of the worshippers, and to call off the minds of a dull and superstitious people from those carnal rites to which they were so entirely wedded, and in which it was the general and prevailing opinion that the whole business of religion consisted. Of a religion of the heart and the affections they had no idea—a rigid and austere inexorable devotion to rites and ceremonies they deemed of more weight than all the other requirements of the law; and this monstrous perversion of its primary character and spiritual nature is discoverable even among those of the Jews who were cotemporaries of our Lord. The psalms which were selected for the daily service of the temple, were admirably suited to kindle devotional feelings and affections, and when accompanied with instrumental music, with the harp, and the psaltery, and the timbrel, and the cornet, and the cymbal, in the execution of which David himself was a perfect master, it being recorded of him that he played on all manner of instruments made of fir-wood ‡, must have possessed an exquisite advantage, and have brought to the enraptured views of the devout that concord of sweet sounds which may well be supposed to distinguish the music of angels, and the company of the singers in the temple above.

The practice of the Jewish church, therefore, in this particular department of its service is of more importance than is commonly perceived. This is no part

\* As in the margin. Psalteries were instruments strung and made of wood, resembling harps, and like the Greek Delta Δ. The Hebrew name for this instrument is *Nabal*, and the Greek ψαλτηριον.

† The xxiv. was appointed for the first day in the week, the xlviii. for the second, the lxxxii. for the third, the xciv. for the fourth, the lxxxv. for the fifth, the xciii. for the sixth day, and for the Sabbath the xcii. was ordained to be sung.

‡ See 2 Sam. vi. 5. See St. Christ. in Psal. cl.

of the ceremonial law which was to be abrogated, or yield to a higher dispensation, as a shadow only of good things to come. It was a step towards the introduction of a purer and more evangelical worship, and such an addition to the legal rites as God was pleased to appoint for the purpose of refining men's minds, and raising them to the contemplation of objects more sublime in their nature, and more spiritual in their character. And as it was subservient to the introduction of the evangelical state, so was it fit that it should continue under it, and become a standing and prominent part in the worship of the Christian church. For, as it appears to have been our blessed Saviour's design to have innovated as little as possible in the Jewish church, and to have established the Gospel rather as an improvement and enlargement, than as a total abrogation of the law, it was his practice, as well as that of the apostles, to conform as much as they consistently could to the then established service, and in many things he modelled the Christian after the pattern of the Jewish church.

With respect to that department of the temple-service, to which I am now more particularly directing your attention, church music, though in the unsettled state in which it at first existed, owing to the persecutions with which it had to struggle, no music could be introduced into the Christian assemblies similar in any degree to that which was established in the temple-service of the Jews, yet, we learn, that even in its very earliest years, vocal and instrumental music obtained in the first meetings of the primitive Christians, as far as was consistent with their then exposed and perilous condition. And hence we infer, how agreeable was this portion of public worship to what I may call the palmy or the best state of the Christian church, when the law of love and kindness reigned supreme in the worshippers' hearts, every affection of which was in beautiful harmony with those sweet sounds which proceeded from every lip; and how fit, therefore, it is, that it should constitute a part of every Christian service, and of every public meeting of Christ's disciples, of whom, would that what was said of the first Christians, could be said of all when met together, "Lo! how these Christians love each other."

Our blessed Saviour, though a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and from whom it might be thought, therefore, that an instance of this duty was least of all to be expected, yet sung a hymn, we are told, when he was instituting the sacrament of the bread and wine—an act by which he consecrated, as it were, the practice of singing, as well on the ordinary as on the more solemn meetings of such as profess to be his disciples. The example of our Divine Master is decisive on the point; and such a scriptural pattern must be all-eloquent in commendation of church music, of which frigid must be that taste that discerns not the beauty, and languid the spirit, and dull the heart, and low the piety, that feels not the uplifting and heaven-exciting aspirations: and I add, that just in proportion to the simplicity, and harmony, and order, with which this part of our church service shall be conducted, will be those aspirations in every well-disposed and well-organized mind. It was the design of Christ that this commemoration of himself should continue in his church until his second coming; and the nearer we approach to the simplicity, and the whole of the manner in which it was administered, the better. We never can err, by following, in the strictness of its letter and spirit, his conduct, in every particular of which the record has been transmitted; and I should say the more simple and the less ostentatious the *form*, the more likely is the mind to be impressed, and the affections to be bettered by the matter! If the voice of Christ was engaged in a hymn or song

of praise then, our voices should also in like manner be raised on that, and on every other occasion on which we meet for public worship; and we should borrow from the example of our dear Lord, on one particularly impressive occasion, an argument in favour of the general use and adoption of hymns and spiritual songs on *all* occasions on which we meet for public service.

The congregations of the primitive church, or the members of the first assemblies of Christians, uniformly followed the practice set by their Divine Master; and their meetings were always distinguished by the introduction and use of vocal music as a component part and inseparable accompaniment of public worship. Hence it is that the Apostle speaks of singing with the Spirit, and singing with the understanding also\*, enjoining us to observe the one as well as the other†. “I will sing,” says he, “with the spirit, and with the understanding also.” Hence it is evident that the Spirit often excited men in an extraordinary manner to the performance of this duty, transported them with extacy, and without exercising that sober and chastised understanding, with which this, as well as all the other parts of the public ministrations of the temple should be conducted, to render them a service fit for the acceptance of a pure and an intelligent Being; and I confess that nothing has impressed me so much with what ought to be the *manner* in which this part of divine worship should be performed, as what I have witnessed and heard in the assemblies of our Protestant dissenting brethren. They all unite—the whole congregation—in raising their voices, and joining in spiritual songs, and nothing can exceed the fervour and piety with which the praises of God are hymned; and I never left such an assembly of Christian worshippers without the wish that the spirit might be transfused, and the example be copied in our churches and chapels; in a few of which, indeed, I have heard vocal music of such exquisite taste and judgment, as was well adapted, by the harmony of its sweet sounds, to produce on the mind the same effects as were experienced from the harp of David, or the minstrelsy of Elisha.

We may collect from one of the many elegant letters of Pliny to his imperial correspondent, Trajan, what was the practice in the first congregations of Christian worshippers, with respect to this part of their service; and an incidental allusion or account of this kind from such a quarter is invaluable. At the time at which he wrote his epistle to the emperor, the name of the sect had been generally diffused, and the progress of the Christian religion had, in all probability, become a matter of speculation and interest; and this I think may be collected from this well known letter of the accomplished Pliny. He commences it by what he calls his ordinary or yearly custom of acquainting him with all that had occurred, and then adverts to the Christians, their peculiar character and particular habits; and in writing of the mode in which their public, or rather their *private* services for the worship of God (as they were then compelled to be) were conducted, he tells the emperor, that all that he found they did at these meetings was, to *sing* to Christ as God, and to bind themselves with a sacrament not to be guilty of any degree of wickedness whatsoever‡—an honourable testimony to the professional faith and consistent practices of the early Christians!

\* 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

† See Dionys. Areop. p. 282.

‡ I have my Pliny before me, and the following are his words:—*Carmen que Christo, quasi Deo, dicere secum invicem; seque sacramento non scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta, &c. &c.*—Lib. x. Epist. xcvi.

It might be thought, that at a period in which the Christian Church was exposed to so many enemies, and was enduring so much persecution, music, instrumental especially, would have been banished from her services, more particularly as the introduction of it would have been the most likely means of discovering the place of their meetings, and the times of their prayers, to their enraged and relentless persecutors. But, nothing dismayed, they chaunted forth their *carmina Christo*—their hymns to Christ. They might weep indeed, at the waters of Babylon; but no harps were hung upon the willows, or in other words, they ceased not at their public meetings to sing, whatever dangers threatened, or whatever terrors were suspended over them. Among the many who suffered under the persecution to which the Christians were exposed under Trajan, was Ignatius, of whom the ecclesiastical historian, Soerates, records\*, that he divided the choir established at the church of Antioch, and taught them the antiphonal mode of singing by parts or responses; and this practice, it is said, he adapted from some revelation or vision which had been communicated to him from above—as the mode in which the music of the angels in heaven was conducted. From the same authority we learn, that this practice was afterwards introduced by Damasus, at Rome, and was adopted in all the churches in the west, as from the example of Ignatius, at Antioch, it universally had spread and obtained in all the churches in the east. So important a part of divine worship was music esteemed at this early period of the Christian church, that the regulation and improvement of it were not considered as beneath the dignity, nor undeserving the attention of some of its brightest and holiest martyrs and saints.

It is needless to adduce further proofs of the early introduction of music into the assemblies of the faithful. The facts above mentioned, viz., its adoption in the time of Pliny, and its regulation by Ignatius, and its universal introduction into all the Eastern and Western churches, are amply sufficient. Those which have been mentioned are the standard of the Christian church, and the best pattern after which every particular community, and every congregation of Christian worshippers can copy; and the nearer we approach to the original, the more likely are we to “sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord”—the more likely is this department of congregational service to be well pleasing to his ear, and acceptable to his sight. Now this is a point to which I would draw the special attention of those who take the lead in this part of the public service in our church, and I will offer such suggestions as I apprehend, if taken in the spirit in which they are made, will be of service to themselves, and of benefit to others.

It is desirable, for this purpose, to inquire why vocal and instrumental music should be introduced as a part of our services? For this, and no other object, but simply the praise and honour of God. Then, the next consideration is, how can it be so conducted as that that object can best be attained; how can the vocal and instrumental performers best discharge their duty to God and themselves? I take it for granted that they have this feeling impressed upon their minds, that when here they are, quite as much as others of the congregation, worshippers of the living God; quite as much reason as have others for the offering up of prayer, and the joining in of every part, and of responding to every petition, which occurs in the public service; that they have the same suit to be urged, the same wants to be supplied, and in a word, the same

\* Eccl. Hist., lib. 6, c. 8.—Platina in vitâ Damasi.

pardon for sin to be asked, the same God and the same Saviour to be implored, and supplicated, and approached. Now where this feeling does exist, there in that man's breast is enkindled a blaze of holy desires to do this part of the Lord's service acceptably—not with eye, nor with ear-service “as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from *the heart.*” This passage of Scripture contains an admirable rule; and, when its spirit has been thoroughly imbibed, it will be found invariably to influence the practice, and to lead the singers to render this part of the public service as reasonable and as improving as possible. For this purpose, they will endeavour to perfect themselves as much as they can in the tunes selected to be sung, in order that no discordant sounds may be heard, no inharmonious notes be produced, nor any serious disappointment be incurred. To avoid such effects, which defeat the very end for which vocal and instrumental music is introduced, they should meet together previously, either at some early hour before the service is commenced, or on some previous day in the week, when their several parts may be duly arranged, and, to perfect themselves, be frequently rehearsed. No person, however gifted his powers, and transcendent his musical attainments, ever dreams of appearing in public without a previous study and a frequent rehearsal of the part which he has undertaken; and if this be the practice with persons of the first-rate vocal or instrumental talent, it surely is one which ought to be invariably followed by the vocal and instrumental performers in our rural churches more particularly, whose opportunities of acquiring the knowledge and science of music cannot be supposed to be great, or such as are possessed by them who have studied it as an art, and have adopted it as a profession. This, then, is an additional reason for the observance of this practice; and more especially so when the *place* is considered in which their performances are to be exhibited, or this their duty is to be discharged.

And there is another rule which I would strongly recommend for their invariable adoption—never to select any tunes but such as are plain and simple, nor any psalms or hymns but such as are well known to the congregation at large, upon every member of which the duty is equally obligatory and binding to take a part in this portion of the public service. This is the practice, of which I have spoken in terms of commendation in a former part of this sermon, and it is one of which—and I avow the sentiment without the slightest meaning to give pain or offence in any quarter—I confess I should like to witness, or hear of the introduction in all of our national churches—that all and every one of the members, of whom each is composed, should unite with one accord, and join as with one voice, in singing to the praise and glory of God. And I do think, where this is done devoutly and universally, it gives to my mind more the image of what takes place daily and hourly in the heavenly courts above, than any thing besides that is to be met with and heard in any of the musical assemblies frequented on earth.

Never can I forget the impressions produced when first I heard this congregational singing, or in other words, all the people assembled raising their voices to heaven, as one, and singing, though “*lustily, yet with the understanding unto the Lord.*” They will never be erased from my recollection. It was in one of our suburban parish churches near London, where I had to preach for a public institution: all sang—not a jarring note was heard, nor a voice scarcely out of tune or place; and never did I enter the pulpit with such devo-

tional feelings, never performed my humble portion of the service with more animation and feeling. St. Austin records of himself, that when he was an attendant on the preaching of St. Ambrose in the church of Milan, the singing of the whole congregation affected him to that degree that he ever seemed still to be ravished at the remembrance of the excellent things that were so endeared to his mind\*; and he makes another confession respecting the effects produced by the power of congregational music on his heart. In younger days he was a heathen, and was in the habit of giving an unbridled indulgence to his passions. While living in riot and extravagance, the fame of the eloquence of St. Ambrose, the father above mentioned, reached his ear; and, attracted by curiosity, he went to hear a preacher, of whose power and influence so much was said. He acknowledges that the object for which he went was simply to hear the preacher, but not to regard the doctrine. He was not deceived as to the eloquence of St. Ambrose, but found that it surpassed even the representations he had received; but the effect which the excellence of the matter wrought on his mind was superior to what the eloquence of the manner of the preacher had produced. He admired the doctrine, and he left the church a Christian, and so conformed in his belief by subsequent intercourse and communion with Ambrose, that he afterwards became the greatest champion for the faith, and the most glorious light of the western world. He records that at the time at which he first attended the ministry of St. Ambrose, the music of the church was so ravishing that he could not restrain from melting into tears, particularly by the congregation singing a hymn† composed by St. Ambrose—probably that still retained in our church after the first lesson, the *Te Deum laudamus*; and he adds, the melody of the voices conveyed the matter deep into his soul, and that every remembrance revived the impressions with which it was originally heard.

Seeing, then, that singing has power to produce such effects, let us all ever join in this duty with grace in our hearts, and with an inflamed and affectionate soul lift up your voices to the Lord. This is the life and spirit of this heavenly exercise, that which renders it acceptable to God, and that without which the utmost melody of voice and instrument will be but as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal. If the devotion of the heart go not along with the harmony of sweet sounds—if the zeal and inward motions of the mind be not spiritualized and raised, together with the music of the voice and the melody of the instruments, we cannot be said to sing unto the Lord; for he takes no pleasure in the one, if the other be wanting. It is the grace in our hearts—the melody and concert of our souls that constitutes the music in God's ear: and the perfection of our singing will only *then* charm him, when it inflames us with holy raptures, and carries our thoughts with greater life, and intenser ardency to heaven. Then the Word of Christ dwells in us richly indeed, and we enter into the dispositions and employments of angels—then we echo to the choir above, and to the church triumphant, and the assembly of the first-born. And blessed are they who so sing to the Lord, for then they shall sing at the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and shall have a place in the new Jerusalem, and sing to eternal ages “Halleluia, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God!”

\* Confess. lib. 1. cap. 13.

† Almost all the hymns used in the church of Milan, were after St. Ambrose called *Ambrosiani*, on account of his having introduced them into the service of that church



## THE MERCY OF THE CURSE.

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REV. H. MELVILL, A.M.

CAMDEN CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, DECEMBER 27, 1835

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“ In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground ; for out of it wast thou taken : for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”—  
GENESIS, iii. 19

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You have here a portion of the sentence pronounced upon Adam, because he had hearkened to his wife, and eaten the forbidden fruit. Sentence had been passed already on the serpent and on Eve : on the serpent who had beguiled our common mother, and that mother herself, through whose disobedience we became mortal and miserable. Unto the serpent it was said, that “ on his belly he should go, and dust should he eat all the days of his life :” a doom which must have referred rather to Satan, who had assumed the serpent’s shape, than to the serpent itself, and might have been accomplished in the abject condition of that fallen, though yet mighty, spirit. Unto the woman it was announced, that it should be in much pain and much anguish she should give birth to her children : an intimation in which there was promise as well as threatening ; for Eve had already heard of “ the seed of the woman ” that was to “ bruise the serpent’s head ;” and she might now gather, that through much suffering there would arise at last a deliverer.

And now must *man* stand forward, and take his doom from the lips of his Maker. Among all the sentences there is none which so marks the hateful character of sin, and its devastating character : “ Cursed is the ground for thy sake.” “ So deadly a thing is the evil which thou hast been instrumental in producing, that the very soil on which thou treadest is thereby made barren. No longer shall the earth yield spontaneously her fruits ; for thorns and thistles shall henceforward be its natural produce. In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thou must wring a hard subsistence from the reluctant field, in place of gathering in an abundance which solicits thy acceptance : and there will be no termination of this toil, until the earth, which has almost refused thee sustenance, shall give thee a grave. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground. Thou hast been formed from that ground ; its dust has been compounded into thy limbs : the curse is upon thy body, and upon all the materials of which its members have been composed. The dust, therefore, must mingle with the dust : dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.”

Such was the sentence on our offending father, and on ourselves as having offended and fallen in him. We need not tell you how faithfully the sentence has been executed. You know that, with few exceptions (and those, perhaps

more apparent than real), labour, painful and oppressive labour, is the lot of human kind; and that it is by some species or another of toil that every man gains his sufficiency of food. If you traverse the globe, you find every where, though not always in the same degree, the human race fighting against want, and the great majority of the population struggling with the earth for a miserable pittance. In some places there is greater luxuriance of the soil; in others greater sterility: but no where do you find that man eats bread except in the sweat of his face. From pole to pole, amidst the snows of perpetual winter, and beneath the blazings of the tropical sun, there is but one cry, and one strife—the cry of millions for the means of subsistence, and the strife of the ground on which rests God's curse, and which, therefore, yields nothing until extorted from it by labour. Thus the history of our race is little more than one vast evidence, that we are the posterity of one whose disobedience spoiled the earth of its fruitfulness; who, receiving in himself the sentence of labour, transmitted it, unexhausted and inexhaustible, to all after generations.

Yet if mercy rejoiced against judgment in the words uttered to the serpent and the woman, let us not too hastily conclude that there was nothing of love in the sentence of which the man was the subject. We are inclined to believe that it was not wholly in anger and in righteous severity, that God made the cursing of the ground the punishment of Adam. We think it will not be difficult to shew, that the Almighty was consulting for the good of his creatures, when he thus made labour their inevitable lot. It was, indeed, in just indignation that he passed the stern sentence which still rests as a heavy burden on ourselves: but it may have happened, that he so shaped the sentence as to make it beneficent as well as punitive, and thus gave cause in reference to this, as in every other instance of his chastisements, to exclaim with David, "I will sing of mercy and of judgment: unto thee, O Lord, will I sing."

It will be our endeavour on the present occasion, to prove that this is the matter of fact. You are aware that we have to appeal to your bounty in support of a grand national cause. The king's letter, which I read to you last Sunday, enjoins that a subscription is to be solicited in all churches of the empire, towards providing the means of religious instruction, for the emancipated Negroes in our West Indian Colonies. In behalf of such an object a collection is to be made this day; and it is my duty so to shape my address, as that it may present you with motives which may excite you to liberality. Thus circumstanced, I have thought that no topic could better introduce the appeal I have to make, than one which should relate to toil as the inheritance of man, an inheritance of which, to say the least, the Negroes have had more than their full share. At present we shall make no statement of the claims of those whose cause we have to plead, but rather reserve them for the conclusion of our discourse: it is sufficient to remind you of the turn, so to speak, which the address must take; and we now return to the subject presented by our text.

We have then to examine into the mercy (for the judgment is sufficiently apparent) of that sentence of God, which took much of its fruitfulness from the earth, and made toil the common heritage of man. We need not limit our remarks to the single case of agriculture; for we may safely affirm, that there is nothing which is worth man's attainment, which he can attain without labour. It is not merely his bread which he wrings with hardship from the ground, but

whatsoever the earth contains of precious and of useful, can only be obtained through being wrenched from its resources, and is procured for us by the bone and sinew of suffering humanity. And where man has not, in strict truth to live by the sweat of his brow, he may have to live, which is far harder, by the sweat of his brain; and intellectual food, even more than bodily, is only to be gathered by dint of unremitting toil. It is the character of the dispensation under which we are placed, that all must be labourers; so that however painful at times the pressure of the ordinance, still we should call to mind that it is what God himself hath appointed us to bear, and it becomes us to submit without murmuring to what cannot be changed, and meekly to believe that we should not be advantaged if it could.

There is, in all probability, an exact adaptation of the scene in which we live to the present state of human nature; for the whole course of the Creator's dealings leads us to expect the adaptation. A soil which it would have been no task to till, but which should have poured forth unsolicited an exuberant plenty, might have been adapted for a race which never transgressed, and which required no painful and corrective discipline. Accordingly, such we believe to have been the soil of this globe as originally created, and fitted for the habitation of the unfallen Adam. But when there had passed a great moral change on man, was it not to be expected, from the character of the divine dealings, that there would pass a great physical change in the soil, and that too irrespective of chastisement, and simply for the preservation of the fitness of the dwelling-place to the circumstances of the inhabitant? It tends very much to aid the belief of this adaptation in the present state of the globe to our nature, that when prophecy delineates times when righteousness shall be universal, it delineates them as also times when its lost fruitfulness shall be restored to the earth. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree:" such is the imagery which enters into the description of the millennium; as though to tell us, that the thorn and the thistle will disappear with the wickedness which first sowed their seeds. With the amelioration of the moral condition of its inhabitants, there is to be the amelioration of the physical condition of the globe; a plain intimation, as we think, that the curse which now rests upon the earth, rests upon it as much in order to adapt it to man, as it is a punishment to man for his apostacy. This we shall now explain at greater length; desiring, in the first place, to prove from the testimony of *experience*, and in the second place, from the testimony of *Scripture*, that there was as much of mercy as of judgment, in the sentence pronounced upon Adam.

Now there is, perhaps, an universal consent upon one proposition—that idleness is the fruitful source of every kind of vice: and it follows from this, that the placing it in a man's power to be idle—supplying him, that is, with the means of subsistence, without extracting from him any labour—is simply to expose him to the greatest possible peril, and almost ensuring his moral degeneracy. We know that there are fine and frequent exceptions to this statement; and that many whose circumstances preclude all necessity of toiling for a livelihood, carve out for themselves paths of honourable industry, and are as assiduous in labour as if compelled by their wants. But such exceptions, after all, prove nothing against our statement; for these are not cases of idleness

but cases in which men, having the power to be idle, have felt the evil of such a state, and voluntarily submitted themselves to the ordinance of labour. The assertion as to the peril of idleness remains untouched; neither is any proof given that it would be safe to intrust the great mass of men with the power of being idle.

This is a point on which we most wish to insist. We care not that you can here and there produce a noble example of industry which is altogether voluntary; we only ask you, whether you believe that such examples would be generally followed, if there were generally a power of choosing between idleness and industry? This is the alone question to be decided when the matter in debate is, the mercy of that arrangement which took away from the soil its first unbounded fruitfulness, and made the mass of men give themselves to honourable and praiseworthy occupations, if no necessity were laid upon them by the wants of their nature. The question may, in a great degree, be answered by a reference to cases in which the approach is the nearest to the supposed exception from want. We look at countries in which the soil possesses the greatest fertility; and are their inhabitants most distinguished by what is laudable or excellent? We look at the classes of society who are born to independence; and is there a preponderance among them of virtue over vice? On the contrary, it may safely be affirmed, that where nature is most prodigal of her bounties, men make least advances in what ennobles a kingdom; and that where affluence is hereditary, the instances are most frequent of profligacy and moral worthlessness. There are districts of this globe, on which the curse of barrenness has fallen so lightly, that they might be thought to have returned to their original fruitfulness, so that there was little or no demand on the labours of the husbandman. The mountain and the valley stand thick with rich produce, and scarcely ask the mattock or the ploughshare. But the inhabitants of these districts are for the most part sunk in the lowest degradation, and are far behind other nations in what is dignified or civilized: no where do you find more of hopeless suffering, or of abject penury; as though misery increased at the same rate as the means of its amelioration.

If you would fix on a people which presents the finest spectacle of greatness, order, and intelligence, you must go to lands where there is a constant struggle for the materials of subsistence; and where any approach to universal idleness would be an approach towards universal destitution. It is *there* that civilization makes its most rapid advances, and that you find the most of a well-ordered and well-conditioned population. And in like manner—though, as we before contended, there are in this cases of fine and frequent exception—if you would select an individual instance of what is elevated and admirable in character, you must search amongst those who have to labour for a livelihood, rather than amongst those whose wants are all supplied by the hoarded wealth of their ancestors. There is evidently a repressing power in abundance, and a stimulating power in penury; the one tending to produce dwarfishness of intellect and mental power—the other to elicit every energy and intellectual greatness. We will not say, that the battle for subsistence has not borne hard on genius, and kept down the loftiness of its aspirings; but we are assured that the cases are of immeasurably more frequent occurrence, in which the man has been indebted to the straitness of his circumstances for the expansion of his mental powers. We could adduce instances without number, in which there is the

greatest reason to believe, that the necessity for exertion has brought out all the strength of the intellect, and in which it would have been to consign the man to mediocrity, if to nothing worse, had you poured on him, at the outset of life, what is called, without reference to the actual chances, a fortune.

We may in passing express our surprise, that many who are themselves instances of the improving power of industry, and who owe all that they have and are to their having been compelled to labour for subsistence, should manifest such an anxiety to bequeath to their children an ample inheritance. They seem blind to the advantages which the want of a large patrimony has proved to themselves; and, therefore, blind also to the fact, which long experience attests, that what has been gathered with great industry by the father, is commonly squandered with great prodigality by the son. We know of no vainer delusion than what is called making a provision for a family, if you mean by it the securing the family against all necessity of providing for themselves. We are no advocates for leaving a family in destitution; as though it were an act of proper faith in the earthly father to commit unreservedly his little ones to his heavenly: but we should never wish to see more bequeathed than might serve to uphold a family while yet too weak to uphold itself, and to assist its members in entering on honourable callings. As to the endeavour to transmit a complete independence, it is just the endeavour to rescind the sentence of our text: and if the endeavour be allowed to succeed, it is commonly a fatal success, full of disasters to those upon whom it may alight. I wish no son of mine to be exempt from the sentence—"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." I have been subject to the sentence myself all my life long, and know it to be good for man that he gains his living by his labour. And the family which we regard as left in the best condition when death removes its head is, not the family for whom there is a fine landed estate, or an ample funded property, but the family which has been thoroughly educated in the principles of religion, and trained to habits of piety and industry; and in which there is just as much wealth as may preserve from want those members who cannot labour for themselves, and start the others in professions which open a broad field for unwearied diligence. It is on families such as this that we see the blessing of the Almighty most evidently resting, and from its ranks are commonly drafted the best ornaments of our community. We believe unreservedly of many a household which has been left to struggle with difficulties, that there has been a worth to it in its contracted means, which would have been poorly compensated by ancestral coffers; and simply because its circumstances have made it incumbent on every member to the putting forth all its energies, has it contributed to the state some of its most exemplary of subjects—men, who, with a large patrimony, might have been perverted into nuisances, or at all events into the mere drones of society.

It is the upshot, as you must all perceive, of these remarks, that it was in mercy, full as much as it was in judgment—in order to adapt the earth to its inhabitants, as much as to visit on its inhabitants the sin they had committed, that the Creator withdrew from the soil its abundant fertility, and imposed on our race the necessity for labour. We wish we could sketch to you what a change would be produced in such a country as our own, by the repeal of the sentence pronounced upon Adam. Let it be imagined that there was suddenly an end for all demand for toil, and that our land yielded almost spontaneously

whatever was needed for the support of our population: we will not say that the whole social system would instantly be disorganized, for time might be required to overthrow confirmed habits of order and industry; but you cannot doubt that a vast and fatal revolution would be immediately commenced. You cannot doubt, that among the lower orders especially, who are accustomed only to the bare necessities of life, there are hundreds and thousands who would prefer the bread of idleness to the bread of labour, whom nothing but the necessity of driving from their doors the stern spectre of famine keep fast to any employment, and who would quickly, if there was the supposed inundation of plenty, cease from occupation, and run riot in abundance: and there would be no power in the upper classes of making head against the lawlessness and insubordination which would thus prevail in the lower, even if they caught nothing of the infection, but were themselves carrying forward the employments of industry. The moment the poorer ranks had resolved on being idle, there would be an arrest on all the business of the higher; for such are the links in the social combination, that in putting one part out of joint you un hinge the whole system: and when you add the almost certainty that the inevitable effects of this comparative sterility for unbounded fruitfulness would extend themselves to every class which is required to labour, you cannot but allow that there would be quickly a cessation of all commerce, and an end of all enterprise, and that the nation would soon present the inglorious spectacle of a mere stagnant humanity, ruffled only by the worst passions of our nature. You can imagine no other condition: we do not believe it would be long ere all that is noble in legislation, pure in theology, splendid in morals, great in intellect, and bold in enterprise, would be buried in one common grave; and anarchy and vice proclaim a carnival, with only here and there an opponent to the most galling of tyrannies.

If there be any thing of truth in this description of the consequences of impregnating the soil of a land with the lost fertility of Paradise, will you not confess that it was with the distinct knowledge and forethought of what would fit a fallen race that the Almighty pronounced the edict of barrenness; that toil has been made the inheritance of man; and that the great bulk of our species must wring from the earth a disastrous subsistence? We conjure you to observe how the well being, and perhaps almost the existence of a community, is dependent on the circulation, through all its classes, of a vigorous industry; and how again that industry is dependent on the sterility of the soil: and then when you see that destroying the necessity for labour, by causing the ground to yield superfluity without toil, would be destroying all that is venerable, and healthful, and dignified, and reducing the people to the lowest level of mere animal being; why you will be forced to allow, that, however harsh in sound, there was the fullest mercy, as well as the richest wisdom in the sentence, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life."

We would yet further observe, before quitting this portion of our subject, that after all God did not so much remove fruitfulness from the soil, as make the development of that fruitfulness dependent on industry. The earth has yielded sufficiency for its ever multiplying population; as though the power of supply grew with the demand: and neither has it only yielded a bare sufficiency, but has been so generous in its productions, that one man by his

tillage may raise bread for hundreds. This is amongst the most beautiful and wonderful of the arrangements of Providence. Why can one amongst us be a clergyman, a second a lawyer, a third a merchant, a fourth a tradesman? Only because, notwithstanding the curse, there is still such fertility in the ground that more corn is produced than suffices for those by whom the ground is cultivated. If the earth would yield only as much as the husbandman himself could consume, why every one of us must be a husbandman, or starve. "The king himself," said Solomon, "is served by the field." He is as much dependent on the field, on the produce of the soil, as the poorest of his subjects: and he must soon cease to be a king—nay, he could never have been a king, if no more provision could be wrung from the earth than was enough for its immediate cultivators. The human race, in all its enlargements, could have been little better than a race of savages; every member being eagerly intent on extorting from the soil his own pittance of food, and none therefore being able to invent or perfect the arts of civilized life; had God made the sterility as great as we have supposed. The whole advance of civilization is dependent on a power in the earth of furnishing more food than those who till it can consume. A people who are always on the border of starvation must be manifestly a people always on the border of barbarism: and just as manifestly a people must be always on the border of starvation, if every individual can only wretch from the ground enough for himself.

Thus, when we come to examine into and trace the actual facts of the case, the mercy of the dispensation exceeds immeasurably the judgment. We again say that we know nothing more beautiful and wonderful than that arrangement of Providence which has bound up all the arts, and refinements, and comforts of civilized life with the ground from which we came, and to which we must return. If the soil had been so fruitful as to ask no industry, men would have been brutal through abundance; and if it had been so sterile as to give to industry only a bare sufficiency, they would have been brutal through penury: and therefore did God take the mean, so to speak, between these extremes, and thus consulted wondrously for the advantage of our race. He made it necessary on man to be a labourer, knowing that nothing would so injure him as the power of being an idler: but then, by forbidding the earth to produce spontaneously its fruits, he had made industry indispensable to the preservation of life: so that while it was the best discipline, it might also prove the best benefactor. He caused that the earth should yield so abundantly to the industrious, that a few might raise food enough for many; so that whilst a small portion might be husbandmen, the rest might be artificers, and teachers, and legislators; and thus the fabric of civil society be reared and cemented. By compelling man to be industrious, he did, as it were, prepare him for civilization: and then in rewarding his industry, he put civilization within his reach. Men were too corrupt to be intrusted with abundance without toil, and therefore God ordained that toil should produce abundance—that there should not be plenty till the wholesome schooling of labour had taught men how to use it.

You may murmur then, if you will, at the ordinance which took from the earth its first boundless fertility: but when we have shown you that there was so much fertility left that the ground gives you, not only the bread on which you live, but your crown, and your senate, and your churches, and your schools

and your commerce, and your manufactures; and that had not labour been made indispensable, men could never have constructed the grand social combination; when we show you this, we know not of what manner of spirit you could be, if murmuring give not place to admiration, and you confess not the graciousness, as well as the wisdom of the appointment, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground"

We proposed, in the second place, to examine, whether there be any intimation in *Scripture*, that the sentence on Adam was designed to breathe mercy as well as judgment. We are disposed to agree with those who consider, that the revelation of the great scheme of redemption was contemporaneous with human transgression. We believe that so soon as man fell, notices were graciously given of a deliverance to be effected in the fulness of time. It is hardly to be supposed that Adam would be left in ignorance of what he was so much concerned to know; and the early institution of sacrifices seem sufficient to shew, that he was taught a religion adapted to his circumstances. But the question now before us is, whether any intimations of redemption were contained in the sentence under review; and whether our common father, as he listened to the words which declared the earth cursed for his sake, might have gathered consolation from the disastrous announcement.

There is one reason why we think this probable, though we may not be able to give distinct proof. Our reason is drawn from the prophecy which Lamech uttered on the birth of his son Noah: "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." And therefore did he call his son Noah, which signifies *rest*; to mark that he connected him with deliverance and respite from that curse which sin had brought on the ground. But in what way was Noah thus connected? How could Noah comfort Lamech in reference to the ground which God had cursed? Some suppose the reference to be to instruments of agriculture which Noah would invent after the flood, and which would much diminish human labour; but this could hardly be said to be a comfort to Lamech, who died *before* the flood: and we may fairly doubt whether a prediction, having reference only to the invention of a few tools, would have been recorded for the instruction of all after generations. But Noah, as the builder of the ark, and the raiser of the new world, when the old had perished in the deluge, was eminently a type of Christ Jesus, in whose church alone is safety, and at whose bidding new heavens and a new earth will succeed to those scathed by the baptism of fire. And as an illustrious type of the Redeemer, though he knew not in what other capacity, Noah might console Lamech and his contemporaries: for the restoration after the deluge, in which they had no personal interest, might be a figure to them of the restitution of all things, when the curse was to be finally removed, and those who had rode out the deluge, receive an everlasting benediction. Thus it would seem highly probable, from the tenor of Lamech's prediction, that he had been made acquainted with the respects in which his son Noah would typify Christ, and that therefore he had been taught to regard the curse on the ground as only temporary, imposed for wise ends, till the manifestation of the Redeemer, under whose sceptre the desert should rejoice and blossom as the rose.



And if so much were revealed to Lamech, it cannot be an over bold supposition, that the same information was imparted to Adam. Thus may our first parent, compelled to till the earth on which rested the curse of its Creator, have known that there were blessings in store; and that though he and his children must dig the ground in the sweat of their face, there would fall on it sweat "like great drops of blood," having virtue to remove the oppressive malediction. It must have been bitter for him to hear of the thorn and the thistle; but he may have learnt how thorns would be woven into a crown, and placed round the forehead of One who should be as the lost tree of life to a dying creation. The curse upon the ground may have been regarded by him as a perpetual memorial of the fatal transgression and the promised salvation, reminding him of the sterility of his own heart, and what toil it would cost the Redeemer to reclaim that heart, and make it bring forth the fruits of righteousness; telling him while pursuing his daily task what internal husbandry was needful, and whose arm alone could break up the fallow ground: and thus Adam may have been comforted, as Lamech was comforted, by the Noah who was to bring rest to wearied humanity: and it may have been in hope as well as in contrition, in thankfulness as well as in sorrow, that he carried with him this sentence on his banishment from Paradise: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life."

But enough on the general truth, that there was mercy as well as judgment—yea, that mercy rejoiced against judgment—in the sentence passed by the Almighty on our offending father. We have not indeed mentioned, though it is well worthy your remark, that had the earth yielded her fruits so abundantly as to leave no place for suffering and destitution, there would have been comparatively no call on man's sympathies, and selfishness would have reigned with unlimited despotism. We must become as angels before we can be fitted to live in a world in which there is no want. Poverty and wretchedness serve to keep alive the best charities of our nature; and it were better to live always in a hospital, and near the ragings of famine, than in the luxuriant land where there was none to ask pity, and none to need succour. And this is one great end which we may believe to have been subserved by the substitution of sterility for fecundity in the soil. The poor are in the land, and cannot cease out of the land while the earth remains under the original curse: and thus by presenting perpetual occasions for the exercise of brotherly love, God has done the utmost to provide against that induration of heart, that contraction of feeling, and that centering of all one's thoughts in one's self, which are amongst the worst symptoms of moral degeneracy.

The ordinance, that in the sweat of his face must man eat bread, secures a continual succession of objects of sympathy, leaving selfishness without excuse, inasmuch as those who suffer least from the curse are solicited on all sides to shew compassion to those who suffer more. And on whom has the curse of labour descended with greater weight, than on those who, for no fault of their own, have been slaves? And on whose behalf, then, can we be more asked for that sympathy, which it was one design of the curse to maintain upon earth? *Slaves!* a freeman's tongue can hardly syllable the word, and a Christian's rejects it as not applicable to man. A *man* and a *slave!* Christianity would long ago, had its genius been unfettered, have made the combination unknown, **except** in the case which is of commonest occurrence, where man is slave to

himself. Christianity indeed found slavery existing on the earth, and pronounced no command requiring its extirpation. It was no part of the design of Christ to interfere with the institutions of society, otherwise than by introducing principles, which if fairly followed out would modify much and exterminate more. No man can pretend to assert that slavery is not inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, or that it is not the tendency of Christianity, when allowed its full scope, to banish slavery from the earth. We hold of our religion, that it permits man to be proprietor of every thing but man; earth, sea, air—he may spread his lordship over all: but *man*, the meanest and poorest, is the brother of man; and in making every man the brother of man, Christianity passed the strongest interdict against trade in human flesh, and property in human sinew.

But so far as our own country is concerned, the day has departed when it would be required of us to prove the unlawfulness of slavery. It was a noble act when the slave trade was abolished: but that act entailed the necessity for another, though many difficulties delayed its execution. When we had once pronounced on the injustice and criminality of the traffic in man, we became pledged to the removing the yoke from the necks of those who had been long in captivity. The one act was the unavoidable consequence, sooner or later, on the other; for, unless willing that the abolition of the slave trade should be a national stigma in place of a national honour, we were bound to take measures for restoring freedom to the thousands whom that trade had cruelly wronged. But the case was one of great difficulty: we had tacitly, at least, if not by any direct law, allowed man to hold property in man; and with what shew of justice could the nation, when resolved that slavery should no longer be tolerated in its colonies, abstract from the proprietors what it had allowed them to purchase and transmit to inheritance? The nation met this difficulty in the only way in which it could be honourably met. It was the nation which had sinned, and the nation must pay the penalty. To have emancipated the negroes without making compensation to the planters would have been a mad endeavour at covering one crime with another; would have been nothing less than substituting robbery for slave-holding. But the compensation was nobly made: and when this country lately made laws which are soon to give freedom to every human being within the broad sweep of its possessions, these laws were as just to the owner as generous to the slave. So far all has been well: but the owner was not the only party who had a right to compensation. The slave had been injured, fearfully injured, by slavery. Away with all theories on this matter. We assert that slavery must be degrading, and that the slave, because a slave, must become less than man. It was a great question—a question which no consciousness of the unlawfulness of slavery should have been allowed to precipitate the answer—whether it would be for the well-being of the slave himself to give him suddenly his freedom.

We were never of those who could join in the cry that was raised for immediate emancipation. We always felt that the slave had been debased by slavery, and that it was full as much our duty to fit him for freedom, as ultimately to give him that freedom. Therefore our legislators did well in appointing a sort of intermediate state between slavery and freedom, fearing that the too sudden transition might turn the slave loose on the world; like that wild creation of romance, in the manhood of physical and the infancy of mental

power, a monstrous and baneful thing, with all the limb and the muscle of a man, out animated only by the unhallowed spell of some desperate magician. We shall not pretend to disguise from you our fears, that even this interval of preparation will not prove sufficient. We are not over sanguine as to the results of this great measure of emancipation. We have much doubt whether, when he come to be altogether his own master, his indolence of character joined to the enervating influence of a tropical climate, will not make the negro a rebel against that great ordinance of labour which has formed our subject of discourse. And the very fertility of the soil may help to produce the consequences which we deprecate, and thus to prove the justice of the argument which we have been engaged in maintaining: for if the negro find that a little toil will provide him a sufficiency, it has yet to be seen whether he will give more than that little, and be any thing better than a reckless idler, unworthy of the liberty which has been granted to him at so costly a price. If such an effect be produced on our slaves, it is fearful to think what a stimulus we shall have given to slavery all over the world. Already, it appears, has the foreign slave-trade been greatly increased by the hope that our colonial produce will not meet the demand, and that we shall be forced to seek a supply from countries where slave labour is still in full play. We hope there will be virtue enough in the legislature to resist this temptation: but we cannot close our eyes to the danger. Let our negro population in the West Indies turn reckless and idle, and we shall have freighted hundreds of vessels for all the horrors of the middle passage.

And why do we indulge in these fears? and why cloud the splendour of a great national act with doubts of its ultimate success? Simply because we think we have yet only imperfectly discharged our duty to the slave, and we would animate you to take the only effectual measures for securing that emancipation shall be a blessing. We injure the slave, and then turn him adrift, uninformed of that spiritual bondage in which he naturally lies, and uninstructed how to throw from him a chain a thousand-fold more galling than any which his task-masters ever imposed. Vain boon, to give him liberty, and leave him slave to that worst of all tyrants, himself! It is the *truth*, said Christ, which makes men free: and unless you take vigorous measures for the Christian instruction of the vast negro population, multiplying churches and schools, and overspreading the colonies with all that apparatus which God has put in our hands for evangelizing the earth; we are bold to say, that you may have compensated the planter, but you have not compensated the slave; and we can anticipate nothing, but that there will come on this land the wrath of retributive justice, and that the millions of immortal creatures whom it has nobly declared free, will be as thorns in its sides, and as a millstone round its neck, because emancipation was not accompanied by education, and that because the edict of Parliament, "Thou shalt not eat bread in the fetters of a bondman," was not carefully followed up by the edict of the Bible, "Thou shalt eat bread in the sweat of thy face."

It is under a sense of the obligation, which on every account is thus laid on England, of providing for the Christian instruction of the negro population of the West Indies, that the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts has asked and obtained the king's letter, under the authority of which you are now solicited for contributions. It appears that the churches and

chapels throughout the whole dioceses of Jamaica and Barbadoes will only accommodate about fifty-seven thousand persons; and yet the coloured population itself is nearly one million. There is a like disproportion in school-houses, and it is calculated that the cost of erecting such additional schools and chapels as may be adequate to the wants of the people, will not be less than one hundred thousand pounds.

Such is the cause which we submit to your consideration. We never submitted a stronger or more important; and we confidently expect to find your liberality proportioned to the exigency. If all that has been told us of slavery be true, it is an incubus on man, chaining down the mind as well as the body. Its removal, therefore, will be followed by a desire after knowledge: the mind will expand, and crave material with which to fill its amplified capacities; and it must be our business to meet this desire, and to provide such material, that the negro may be raised to his due place amongst men. We owe him a long debt; God has noted the injustice of which he has been the victim, and the cupidity which has debased him, though formed in the divine image, into a mere beast of burden. The scalding tears which he shed when torn from his native land, and the groans wrung from him through years of oppression, may be all treasured up against some day of retribution. We have been awakened to a sense of our danger; we have listened to the pathetic cry, "Am I not a man and a brother?" and dashed away the fetters which our own hands had forged. But we have only half done our duty. They are immortal beings whom we have liberated: we must teach them their immortality, otherwise will liberty be a curse, and the freemen become the scourge and terror of their liberators. The eyes of the world are upon us: we have made a bold and a fine experiment: but if through our neglect it come to pass that the emancipated abuse their freedom, and prove themselves unfit for such a privilege, we shall have done more against the sacred cause of liberty, than if we had still kept in bondage our negro population. Other nations will point to our failure, as justifying their refusal to emancipate; and America, both North and South, will strengthen her already iron-handed tyranny, and vindicate from our experience, her still grinding into money the bone and the sinew of human kind.

I can say no more. The cause is a great one, and commends itself to you as men, and yet more as Christians. We wait for proof, that standing fast yourselves in "the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free," you will not be content till that liberty is enjoyed by those, who must otherwise be free only in name.

## THE CURE OF THE SPIRITUAL DISEASE.

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REV. W. JAY,

ARGYLE CHAPEL, BATH, SEPTEMBER 27, 1835.

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“Wilt thou be made whole?”—JOHN, v. 6.

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THUS the chapter begins: “After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep-market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.” It is commonly and justly supposed, that these porches were for the accommodation of the poor, provided by the liberality of the rich. I am aware of the difficulty attached to this portion of Scripture, and of the discussions which it has produced among the learned. With regard to these we only observe, that the healing quality of this water was *undeniably supernatural*; “For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.” You see, first, the instrument employed to communicate the virtue was an angel. Angels are “ministering spirits;” and dignified as they are, there is no office which their piety, and humility, and benevolence will not perform. Secondly, the salubrity was *periodical*: thirdly, it only healed *one* individual at a time: but fourthly, it cured him “of whatsoever disease he had.” Neither of these conditions will agree with the qualities of ordinary medicinal waters, like *ours*.

It is not possible to determine precisely *when* the pool was endowed with this efficaciousness. None of the Jewish historians speak of it as virtuous; neither is its virtue mentioned in the Scriptures before the appearance of the Son of God. It is probable, therefore, that it was endowed with this property about the time of our Saviour's birth; and this miracle was designed to prepare for the belief of other miracles, and this benefit was intended to raise the expectation to higher benefits: “In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.”

What hath sin done! How various and how numerous are the evils which afflict human nature! We are not sufficiently acquainted with them, and there are many who are unwilling to know them: they cherish a delicacy that hides their researches; otherwise it would be surely profitable for them to enter garrets, and hovels, and cellars, and hospitals, and infirmaries, for the purpose of gratitude and sympathy, thankful for their own exemption, and weeping with them that weep. When Howard passed through Italy, though, as is well known, he was an amateur painter, and a connoisseur too, having a large collection of his own, to which he was continually adding, as he possessed the means of

doing so; yet he fled by all the exhibitions of paintings, in order to plunge into dungeons and prisons to relieve the miserable. What a follower of Him who went about doing good!

This seems to have been the very first place that our Saviour visited when he ascended up to Jerusalem: and it afforded a fine opportunity for the display of his character. Some of our fellow-creatures seem made to "possess months of vanity," and "have wearisome nights appointed them:" they seem to have been made, as it were in vain: incapable of enjoyment, unfit for the active services of life, they seem to live only to die, and dying while they live. Among the objects of woe here found by our Saviour, his attention was struck by a poor wretch who had groaned under his malady for thirty and eight years, and had been often waiting at the pool for the propitious moment; but always had the mortification to be prevented by those who were less helpless than himself, or who were better served. The Saviour knew all his distress; and his eye affected his heart: "When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?" The poor invalid, not being acquainted with our Saviour, did not comprehend at first the full force of the question: he supposed that he was a kind Israelite, who was ready to offer him his assistance to put him into the laver, as soon as there was a favourable opportunity. And hence, he does not directly answer the demand, but only complains bitterly of the merciless neglect which he had experienced. "The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." The reply awakened all the emotions of tenderness in the Redeemer's bosom; and giving way immediately to his pity and to his power, Jesus saith unto him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked."

You see I have passed by the question which is to engage your attention this evening, in order to give you a full view of the narrative. But, my dear hearers, for what purpose do you suppose this case and this recovery were recorded? You will never read the Gospel, never peruse the history of the Saviour with advantage, till you learn to bring it home to your own businesses and bosoms; till you learn to rise from the body to the soul, and in the recovery of the one, to acknowledge the salvation of the other. He who came to seek and to save that which is lost is here this evening, and he is asking each of you, in another and a nobler sense than here, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

Let us first consider what is supposed in the condition of the persons addressed. Secondly, what is implied in the question. Thirdly, how you may return an answer to this inquiry. Fourthly, what should render you willing to avail yourselves of this proposal: and, lastly, what is the duty of those who have been enabled to answer, "Yea, Lord," and have experienced his recovering mercy. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if do them."

First, WHAT IS SUPPOSED IN THE CONDITION OF THE PERSON ADDRESSED. Why, he is a patient; he is in a state of disorder and disease; or the address of the Saviour would be absurd. And here at once we come into conflict with the prejudices and the pride of man. You often hear persons talking of "the dignity of human nature;" and if we consider it physically and intellectually, it *is* dignified, when we see man in his capacity for boundless improvement,

in the expansion of his powers, in the acquisition of literature, in the progress of philosophy. For instance now, refer to the sublime discoveries in astronomy: see the astronomer going *back* and fixing past eclipses—going *forward* and fixing future ones, for ages to come, punctiliously. You see him reducing comets from their supposed erratic courses to their regular and proper orbits, and foretelling to a few hours the return of one of these bodies, after an absence of seventy-five years, during which, with inconceivable rapidity, it has been sweeping the bosom of immensity. O when we see man accomplishing all this, here he appears really great; and blockheads should learn to revere minds which are above them, and to place some dependence upon them: and here we see that man is made “a little lower than the angels.”

But O how lamentable is it to find any of these fine powers misapplied and abused. What is man morally? What is he religiously? What is his state and disposition towards God? Why he is a fallen, a guilty, a depraved, a perishing, and in himself a helpless creature. His *body* has become mortal, and subject to every calamity; and his *soul* is alienated from the life of God. The members of the Establishment are continually acknowledging this in their devotions: they have this very day said, “We are tied and bound by the chain of our sin:” “There is no health in us:” meaning, no *moral* or *spiritual* health; for otherwise the language would not be true. Yet how often are these words used without reflection, and how frequently is the truth of them denied by those who employ them! So that sometimes when the minister ascends the pulpit, and takes as the ground of his discourse the confessions made in the reading-desk, he gives offence, and draws upon himself reproach. And *let* him—he has the *truth* on his side: he will have the testimony in the consciences of his hearers: the Scriptures will bear him through. The Scriptures decide this melancholy fact by even the provision of the Gospel: for in the name of reason and common sense, what need is there of a redemption, if we are not enslaved, and of a Saviour if we are not lost, and of a remedy if we are not sick and dying? And by the most express *decisions*, too, assuring us that “all have sinned;” that “all have become guilty before God;” that all are “condemned” by the law of God; that “every mouth is stopped,” and “all the world is guilty before God;” that “the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint,” and that “from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is nothing but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.” All the principles, all the powers, of the soul are affected by sin, precisely in the same way as the body is injured by disease: and it would be easy, if we had time, to describe the state in which mankind are now found. You may see it in the perversion of the judgment; you may see it in the ignorance of the understanding; you may see it in the rebellion of the will; you may see it in the pollution of the very conscience; you may see it in the inconsistency, tyranny, and carnality of the affections; you may see it in the folly and the iniquity of the life, while destruction and misery are in their paths. This is the condition of the persons here addressed.

But let us inquire, secondly, WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE QUESTION. Two things are implied in it.

First, that *the disease is curable*: for our dear Saviour would not raise our attention to trifle with us, much less to deceive us. The case is indeed despe-

rate with regard to our own ability, and with regard to the sufficiency of all creatures

" The help of man and angels joined,  
 Could never reach our case;  
 Not could we hope relief to find,  
 But in his boundless grace."

But there is hope in Israel concerning this thing; and no where else. Call upon the government to cure the patient: call upon its *philosophers*. They had a long time to practise upon poor human nature; and it only grew worse and worse under their hands: so that "the world by wisdom knew not God." The skill they displayed in every thing else totally failed them here, and "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools:" they were "vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened." Well, then, call in *Moses* to cure it. Moses! why "by the law is the knowledge of sin." The law only "worketh wrath," by pronouncing condemnation upon every transgressor. Well, then, call for the *Christian moralists*. They, having nothing to do with the cross, and with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though they may occasionally produce an instance of outward reformation, can never produce the renewing of the mind—can never produce a new creature. God only gives testimony to the word of his grace; and it is only "the truth as it is in Jesus" that can either, when preached, break a whole heart or heal a broken one. But while all others address the man in vain—while each upon being applied to must withdraw, saying, "Help is not in me;" He (blessed be his name!) comes forward, and brings health and cure: he says, "I will come and heal him." O how many millions have experienced the efficacy of his cross and grace now before the throne; and how many thousands are there now living on earth, on our world which lieth in wickedness, who are witnesses for him! For though these are not free from infirmity, though they complain of inward corruption, yet are they new creatures; yet old things have passed away, and all things have become new; yet they are walking by faith, having their conversation in heaven, looking for that blessed hope.

Secondly, it is implied that *willingness to be cured is essential to recovery*. For this cure is not forced upon you; neither is it accomplished by a physical kind of operation of which you are insensible, or by a charm; but by a method which requires thought, conviction, recollection, inclination, choice. There is no deviation from this, even in the work of the Spirit of God itself. The way he proceeds is to "open the eyes of the understanding," and show us what is "the hope of our calling," and what is "the glory of the riches of his inheritance." He works in us "to will and to do." He draws not, drags not; for we run after. No man will ever *drop* into heaven by *chance*; no man will ever be *forced* into it against his will: this is not God's way. But his way is, by a divine influence to make us sensible of our need of the blessing, to convince us of the importance and excellency of it; to lead us to prize it, to long for it, to seek for it: and then the attainment of it will render us both *blessed* and *grateful*. Thus Mary, we are told, "*chose* the good path," which *should* not be taken away from her. Thus David says, "I will walk at *liberty*; for I keep thy statutes:" "I have *chosen* the way of truth; thy testimony have I set before me." "He that feareth the Lord, him shall he teach in the *way*." What way? "The way he shall *choose*."



Thirdly, HOW ARE YOU TO RETURN AN ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION: "Wilt thou be made whole?" It is not necessary that you should answer it in so many words, yes or no: this is not our meaning. But we often say that "facts are stubborn things," and that "actions speak louder than words;" and, indeed, they do. The sacred writers never strike out further than this: they put the conduct of sinners into language, and tell us what this language is. 'Then they say unto God, Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.'" "Then they say to the prophets, Get you out of the way; cause the Holy One to cease from before us." The workings of Divine grace in the soul do not require the formality of expression. Even *prayer*, which is the language of the soul, does not consist of words: words are not necessary in our addresses to God: "He that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the spirit:" "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered."

So that, you see, you are now as capable as this man was of answering this question: and you *are* answering it; you are daily and hourly answering it. You are saying, "Yes;" or testifying your *readiness* to be cured—

First, *by your inquiring after the way and the means*, saying, "What must I do to be saved?" "How shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?" Searching the Scripture now as never you did before; searching it now to find the only thing which it was principally designed to make known, namely, a dying, rising Saviour. "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

And, secondly, you show your willingness to be cured *by your applying to the Physician*, resorting to his footstool, and crying, "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee." Not like Ephraim, of whom it is said that "when he saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." A man in the condition I am speaking of would rather fall at his feet, saying, "Lord, carest thou not that I perish?" than have recourse to other expedients.

Thirdly, your readiness to be cured is proved by *your submission to his prescription without murmuring or complaint*. When the man of God had prescribed for the cure of Naaman, you will remember "Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." So he *thought*: but it did not become him to think, but to *acquiesce*. But, said he, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage;" and had nearly missed his cure. How different was it with the poor blind man whose recovery is recorded in the ninth of John! When he was asked how his eyes were opened, he answered and said, "A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash." He did not say, "Why clay is more likely to injure my eyes than to open them; and whoever, from the beginning of the world, knew that the eyes of a man were opened by washing in a pool?" No; but what did he? He "went and washed, and received his sight." And this is the disposition of every

awakened and convinced sinner—every one who is willing to be healed by this Saviour: he will say, “If by *any* means: Lord, prescribe; I submit, however mysterious it may seem to my reason, however humiliating to the pride of my heart; whatever provision or sacrifice thou requirest: Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” He does not wish the Saviour to act the part of an empiric, to just check the disease, or drive in the complaint, and to increase it inwardly, but wishes to be free from the very principle, from the very cause of the malady—wishes to be made *entirely* whole.

And this willingness to be cured will also appear in the *eagerness with which you* will sometimes look after convalescence. You know how much is at stake—your eternal life. “O! am I to live, or am I to die? Am I to be cured, or am I not?” O what pleasure, therefore, will be discerned in every small sign of returning health—any little appetite you have after the provision of God’s house—any little goodness of pulse you feel—any little strength—any little ability to walk, if not to walk in the way of his commandments. How will this encourage and delight your souls!

In the fourth place, we will inquire, WHAT SHOULD URGE YOU TO AVAIL YOURSELVES OF THIS PROPOSAL? “Wilt thou be made whole?” The thing would not take place in any case—would not be necessary. With regard to the body, some of you very well know—the body, to be cured of its wants and its complaints, must be relieved. It would be a very strange thing indeed, if it were possible for a person to be urged daily and hourly in vain—a blind man, “Wilt thou receive thy sight?”—a deaf man, “Wilt thou receive thy hearing?”—or a sick and dying man, “Wilt thou be recovered and live?” But so it is with regard to spiritual matters: and our Saviour has explained the thing: he tells us that such persons are not aware of their condition, not sensible of their danger: “They that be whole (says he) need not a physician, but they who are sick.” O! of what importance is it, therefore, that you should be sensible of the condition that you are in; that you should feel this conviction; that you should be willing to receive this divine and everlasting cure!

For which purpose, and to bring yourselves to this readiness, you should consider *the complaint itself*; that there is nothing so dreadful; that no disorder of the body will bear comparison with it; that it vitiates the nobler part of you; that it destroys the beauty of the soul, the strength of the soul, the freedom of the soul, the pleasures of the soul, the activity and usefulness of the soul; and that it exposes, not to a *temporal* death, but to an *eternal*, to “the second death.” Is there not enough in this to alarm you, and to make you willing to be saved?

Then consider also *the Physician who addresses you*. He has every thing to recommend him. Job rejected his friends, under the notion that they were physicians of no value. But the Lord Jesus is the very reverse of this: he is infinitely *able*; no difficulty can be too great for his skill; his power is almighty, he never failed in any case yet which he undertook since the creation of the world. He is “able to do for you exceeding abundantly, above all that you can ask or think.” And he is equally *willing*. He will perform the cure without money, and without price: and he is always accessible; he is always ready to attend you: he has said, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.”

And then, to excite you to avail yourselves of this proposal, remember that *the time of cure is limited*, that it is *short*, that it is *very uncertain*. Did you ever read the language of God with regard to the Jews of old? "My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me." When he said, "Wilt thou be made whole?" they said, "No." "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels!" though he did not without a sigh, as it were. "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my way!" Do you remember the lamentation of the Saviour over Jerusalem, whose children he would fain have gathered as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but they would not! He says, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." It is only *now* that he addresses you the question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" I do not like to consider persons as having outlived the day of grace while they are here, while they are in life: while there is life there is hope, physically and morally. But, on the other hand, there are opportunities, favourable opportunities, which may pass, never to return. There are impressions that may be worn off, there are convictions that may be starved for want of provision. We know that his Spirit will not always strive with man on the earth; and we know that at death all the opportunity of salvation is over. There is no future summer or harvest (to change the metaphor we are so much employing this evening): if you were compelled to say, "the harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved," it must be so for ever.

And then, once more, to urge upon you a willingness to avail yourselves of this offer, remember that *the refusal and the rejection will be the greatest aggravation of the misery by which it will be ended*. When man suffers righteously or innocently he has something to dignify, something to bear him up; he has confidence; he reflects that God is on his side, and sooner or later will appear for him. But it is dreadful, when in the midst of our suffering a voice cries, "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" Formerly, when a man committed suicide he was buried in the cross-way, and a stake was driven through his body, in order to excite in the unburied a horror of the crime. You will not be precisely thus treated in hell, but you will be treated in a manner analogous to it. O how you will be execrated there! For you will enter there as suicides, as self-murderers, as soul-murderers. O then will be the intensity of your anguish! The reflection, "This misery might have been avoided; this blessedness, from which I am excluded, might have been my own"—this will be the cause, and this will be the aggravation, of your misery. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." "I have called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;" therefore, says he, "will I laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." A God insulting the sinner! A God before the universe mocking the wretch, and reproaching him with his folly and his madness!

Finally, WHAT IS THE DUTY OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ENABLED TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION, and to say, "Yea, Lord," and who have experienced his recovering mercy. What is required of you in the way of duty but to avoid that from which you have suffered so much already; but to avoid that

which so disgraced, and so degraded, and so injured you, and that brought you down to the very gates of death and hell? As our Saviour said to this poor man, "go thy way: sin no more, lest a worst thing come upon thee:" or, as David says, "Ye that fear the Lord hate evil."

And what becomes you, but to be thankful for your recovery; to present your body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God? To say with David, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling: therefore will I walk before the Lord in the land of the living." What but to recommend your Deliverer to others—to tell them what a Saviour you have found. You often observe in newspapers and periodicals acknowledgments from patients when they have obtained relief: and these acknowledgments arise from two things; from compassion towards their fellow sufferers, and also from a regard to the physician. If all the cases which our Saviour has cured from the beginning, the world, I suppose, would not contain the books that would be written. By and bye they will all be made known, to the honour of this Physician; hereafter, when He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe: and there are enough of these cures well authenticated *now* (though not all attended with equally remarkable circumstances) to render all who come to the knowledge of them inexcusable if the Saviour does not make them whole. Be concerned, therefore, to seize every opportunity to tell what God hath done for your souls. If you speak the truth, not in an angry and controversial way, but with simplicity and sincerity, and an obvious concern to do good, you may be the means of saving a soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins. And what an honour will then be conferred upon you! The salvation of one soul is a nobler deed than the delivery of an empire from civil bondage.

But you must remember that in doing this a certain kind of consistency of character *becomes* you, and will be *required* of you; otherwise you had better a great deal be silent, and say not one word concerning your religion: otherwise people will think you are only bringing forward some of your own opinions, or uttering the Shibboleth of a party, or making known something in order to furnish materials for a dispute. O take care that you do not throw stumbling-blocks in the way of the blind, and that you do not add weight to the calumnies of the malignant. If you recommend the remedy while you are diseased yourselves, and while death stares you in the face, you will do nothing; every one will say of course to you, "Physician, heal thyself. You don't believe one word of what you are saying to us; for if you did, you would have tried the efficacy of this remedy upon yourself: and then you would have come with advantage to us, to recommend it by your use and your own experience." You had need, therefore, to be concerned to hold forth the Word by your life, as well as your lips—by your tempers, as well as your tongues.

" Then shall you best proclaim abroad  
The honours of your Saviour God,  
When his salvation works within,  
And grace subdues the power of sin."

## THE SAFETY OF BELIEVERS IN TIMES OF JUDGMENT.

REV. J. WILCOX, A.M.

TAVISTOCK CHAPEL, BROAD COURT, APRIL 24, 1831.

“And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places; when it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place.”—ISAIAH, xxxii. 18, 19.

THE circumstances of the world are now such that every Christian is, in a degree, compelled to reflect. Inconsiderateness and folly have too long characterized the people of this country, and while the nations of the Continent have been filling up the measure of their iniquity by leaving off the very semblance of religion; by open infidelity, and endeavours to promote popery; we, also, have maintained the form, but have neglected the spirit of Christianity. John, in the Revelations, declares what shall follow the pouring out of the seventh vial: “And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.” This is not a literal earthquake, in the common acceptation of the term, but such a concussion of the states of the world as never hath been or after it shall be while the world lasts. Isaiah, ii. 20, 21, foretels a period which is evidently, as yet, to come. “In that day shall a man cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.” Indeed none but a blind, infatuated politician of the present day, can do otherwise than perceive the portentous signs of the times; and whether these people will hear, or whether they will forbear, a Christian, and especially a Christian minister, will examine the foundation of his hope and the state of his experience, that he may be prepared for whatever purposes God may bring to pass. In such circumstances what a blessing are the riches of divine truth, understood and applied to the heart by the powerful agency of the Holy Spirit! Men may, and will naturally, make light of religion, till they are brought into such extremities as to find nothing but religion will suffice: nothing but an interest and part in that covenant which God has made, who made heaven and earth, will avail; nothing but a portion in those blessings which religion confers, will give them comfort; until they are brought into such circumstances as will make them come to this religion for support, the principles of our holy religion, its precepts and practice will continue to be derided or neglected by the great body of society. If there ever was a period in the history of the world, in which this extremity is to take place it does

appear to be in this very day in which we live ; wherein we see with our eyes such wondrous things. I should hold myself a traitor to you, I should account myself a rebel to my God ; I should consider myself unfit for the Christian ministry, if I did not, without the smallest compromise, exert all the energies I possess in the endeavour to awaken your attention to these things, that you may be personally benefited by the Gospel you hear in this crisis ; in which period I believe God, by the spirit of his word, will support his people, and by which he will grant us sufficient consolation. It is then with reference to this crisis, I have found it my duty and my privilege to bring forth one of the multitude of passages of Scripture, giving consolation to the Christian under the foretold season of trial, that the people of God may be benefited thereby : and I pray that God may open your eyes to see the true glories contained in the text, and that you may grow in faith and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I have selected this portion of the word of God for the subject of our discourse, since it is these relations that afford contempt for the infidel, but comfort beyond all description for the believer. It is in the truths of this holy book, the Christian reads and realizes his stability in the midst of convulsions of the earth : and while the bands of the earth are torn asunder, and the ties of nature are dissolved, he realizes in the word of this testimony a security which this alone can give.

Our text leads us to consider, first, the coming judgments of the Lord ; secondly, the blessed promises made to his seeking people ; thirdly, the period when these promises shall have their fulfilment. May God the Holy Ghost enlighten all our understandings—may our eyes be opened and our hearts be prepared to apprehend those great truths.

First, contemplate THE COMING JUDGMENTS OF THE LORD. The context clearly indicates a season of suffering which no part of history has yet dwelt upon. Look from the ninth to the fourteenth verses in this chapter, and you will see language important enough to excite the attention of the most indifferent. Now, no history with which I am acquainted contains an account of the fulfilment of these predictions. "Rise up, ye women that are at ease ; hear my voice, ye careless daughters ; give ear unto my speech. Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women : for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come. Tremble, ye women that are at ease ; be troubled, ye careless ones : strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins. They shall lament for the teats, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers ; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city : because the palaces shall be forsaken ; the multitude of the city shall be left ; the forts and towers shall be dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks." The desolation here spoken of, is future : and, from the signs of the times, it appears to me to be very nigh at hand. The great question, therefore, for the watchmen of Israel to bring before those to whom they are sent is, Where is there a hiding place, and to what quarter are we to look for refuge ? Where is the port from the coming storm ? How shall we escape the judgments that are coming upon the earth ? The text sets forth the judgments of the Lord under the figure of a hail-storm ; and the divine vengeance is frequently represented by that metaphor. So it is in Isaiah, xxviii. 2 : "Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which

as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall east down to the earth with the hand.' As in Isaiah, xxx. 30: "And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lightning down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones." Also in Rev. xvi. 21: "And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great." These all testify the extremity of the vengeance which God was about to inflict upon the earth. The subjects of vengeance in this storm are considered, I believe, by every commentator, as the domains of the eastern and western Antichrist, with all the subordinate states, countries, and individuals that have supported them. "And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places, when it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place." There is no danger of making any mistake on this point, upon which all who have written, the most able commentators, and the most learned persons spiritually enlightened, have expressed the same opinion: they have declared it to mean mystical Babylon. The proof of this we have in Rev. xvi. 19: "And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nation fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath."

Also, in Rev. xix. 17, &c. you will see the tremendous judgments of God that are about to come: "And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God, that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse (the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God had before spoken of him in this character), and against his army (the saints)." Now, it is not only antichrist, the eastern and western antichrist, but it is, according to my reading, and according to the knowledge God has been pleased to communicate to me (for I am not ashamed to confess I know nothing by mere reading of the speculative opinions of men), it is not by reading the many books written on this point that I have come to an opinion; but it is from the study of the Scriptures alone this opinion is formed, so that if I err, I err not from these works, but from my own dark understanding: I feel constrained, then, to say, that all who have, directly or indirectly, contributed to this beast, and to the power of the beast, shall feel the vengeance of the Almighty. And can we expect England to escape? I do not. I am sure the vengeance of God is now against us. Since the public voice and the hand of fellowship have been raised for and given to the Church of Rome, the hand of the Lord has been against us; so that we also shall taste of the cup of wrath, and smart beneath the rod of God. And all, whether publicly or privately, who have come forward for this enemy of the Lamb; all who have, directly or indirectly, aided the beast, shall be involved in the punishment coming upon the world. We want no miraculous announcement to convince us that the

Lord has a war to make with men; for such is the present aspect of the times. There is not a man who can come forth and say, Here I am, and none shall remove me from my stand. It is in this crisis, so nearly approaching, religion will be the only comfort, the only source of pleasure, while all things around are sinking into ruin, amidst inconceivable misery.

But though we are compelled against ourselves to open our mouths and proclaim the judgments of the Lord, yet we observe, that IN THE MIDST OF THIS DESOLATION HE PROMISES BOTH THE SECURITY AND QUIET OF HIS PEOPLE. The same love which is seen exercised for their salvation is seen manifested in their protection. "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Here you will see he is made the protector of his people. "And a man" (says the Prophet). What man? Your own hearts will testify, that never was, is not, and never will be any but he, even Jesus, who hath condescended to take manhood into Deity that he may make a full atonement for the sins of his people, and provide a hiding-place from every storm, and a covert from every tempest; for as the plague of hail sent upon the land of Egypt during the reign of Pharaoh went not amongst the Israelites, but passed over the land of Goshen, and fell in a grievous storm upon the Egyptians, so shall it be with all those who fear the Lord and delight to serve him. That beautiful Psalm (xci.), how does it open with consolation to the people of God! "Him that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence." No one doctrine is better substantiated in the Holy Scriptures than that of God's care and defence of his people. My dear friends, I would not give up the conviction I have of God's particular providence for all the gold, and silver, and titles, you can confer upon me! We know there is no Providence but is working for our good. I know there is nothing can come upon my head unless he permit it: and to know that whatever I am called upon to endure I shall be made better thereby, and rendered fitter to enter into the joy of my Lord, does it not take away the sting from every punishment? Does it not remove the bitter from the cup of affliction? Does not distress press less heavily upon me when I know that it is designed for this glorious purpose, to bring me near my heavenly Father, to make me live upon him here, and anticipate an eternal union with him in the realms of bliss hereafter? How beautiful is the simile imparted by Isaiah (xxxii. 4, 5), "For this hath the Lord spoken unto me, Like as the lion, and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them; so shall the Lord of Hosts come down to fight for Mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. As birds flying, so will the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it." Scarcely less beautiful is the language of the same Prophet (xxvii. 2, 3, 4), "In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. Fury is not in me." Hear this, ye believing people of God: it is not fury, vengeance, and wrath coming upon you who have



fled to the Gospel and have found refuge in the only Saviour. Your troubles, sorrows, and conflicts within, and your trials without, are all the gracious corrections of your heavenly Father, to wean you from the world and bring you to the hiding-place from the storm, the refuge from the tempest, which covenant love has provided. You will observe, in our text, the Lord promises quiet resting-places and a peaceable habitation. "And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places." Now they shall have sure peace in their own soul. That is best of all; for who can give a guilty conscience peace? "The spirit of man may sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" But the Christian shall have this mind; his spirit shall be healed; his sorrowing soul shall be comforted. How? By the assurance that his sins are forgiven. This is the direction of God to the Prophet Isaiah (xl. 1, 2.) "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Now, the Lord doth bring into the hearts of his people a sense of their forgiveness, an assurance that their sins are pardoned; a testimony that their sins are blotted out as a cloud, and as a thick cloud their transgression. Perhaps I am speaking to some who say, with Nicodemus, "How can these things be? I have not found it so. It has not been thus with me." If so, you have been living without the invaluable blessing of the Spirit: you have not sought his assistance, and therefore you know nothing of the comforts of the Holy Ghost: you have not desired anxiously to find these; for sure I am, that those who seek faithfully shall find—certain I am that God will not falsify his promise: but if we have been careless before God—if we have been hanging our harps upon the willows, when we ought to be attuning them to the praise of God—if we have been inactive and forgetful of his mercies, how can we expect to renew our spiritual strength? You must wait upon God, you must bow at his footstool, you must seek his face, and then shall your minds be strengthened and your souls refreshed. O, sirs, it is not going once or twice a week to the house of God that will make the soul fat and flourishing! There must be a perfect love to God, there must be a constant living to him, there must be a perfect surrender of all we have to him, there must be a living with God, and a coming to God; that people may see our religion is more than a shadow—that we are believers in the truth: and the consequence will assuredly be, we shall have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the testimony of the apostle Paul, "There is therefore, now, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And we shall not only have peace in our own consciences, resulting from reconciliation with God, but we shall have peace within our souls.

When ourselves are given up to God, then that blessed prediction contained in Isaiah (xi. 13) will come to pass in our experience, "The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." I am quite sure this prophecy has not as yet been fulfilled; we see the church of God in a state of lamentable apathy, arising from envyings and coldness of heart. We see Christians possessing the same common faith, dividing themselves from one

another, and making unity and concord a matter of no moment; parting them selves from each other, and giving room for the scoffings of infidelity: but the time is coming, and though I am no prophet, yet I see the time is coming, when all these specks upon Christianity shall be placed, where they ought to be placed, in outer darkness, when Christ shall reign gloriously, when he shall overcome all those petty, bitter distinctions that savour of coldness in the Church, and retard the interests of real religion. Then we shall see another thing, Jew and Gentile striving together for the benefit of the common faith: there shall be no longer a holding of the Gentiles as unworthy by the high-minded Jew, neither will there exist any more prejudice in the minds of the Gentiles against the Jew: for saith our blessed Lord, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also must I bring, that there may be one fold under one Shepherd." When we are able to realize the peace which the text promises, even the peace of God—when we are brought resting on Him, who is alone the support and sustenance of his Church and people—when we are brought to that which shall nullify all that Satan, and the world, and the flesh endeavour to do—when we are brought to work righteousness; then shall we realize what the text promises, and shall dwell in peace. I cannot help thinking that the Christian very much resembles the travellers whom we have heard of in our own, but especially in other countries, who climb the mountain's heights, where the sun is shining beautifully at the summit, while the storm is seen to swell in the valley at the foot of it. The traveller mounts above the cloud, enjoys the sunshine and the joys it brings, while the storm is seen by him ruffling the valley below. So the Christian, when he has climbed mount Zion, can look around on all the beauteous scenes which meet his vision there; he can look calmly on all the bustling scenes that burst upon him from within, because he possesses the "peace of God which passeth all understanding," for he is walking with his God, he hath committed all he possesses into his hand; so that with feelings such as these, he hath sunshine which nothing can obscure or darken.

But, it may be inquired, WHEN SHALL THESE BLESSED TRUTHS BE ACCOMPLISHED? WHEN SHALL THE PREDICTIONS IN THE TEXT TAKE PLACE? Read the first verse of this chapter, and what is there stated is enough to answer all inquiries upon this head, "Behold a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." I expect this when the King of righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ reigns. He does not reign at present: you see how many enemies are disputing his power; you see how infidelity is walking abroad in the noon-day: you see how the great men of the world are legislating without this King: we have none to stand up for this great Prince. O, sirs! it will never be well with our nation until we are brought to recognise God in all the public acts of the day. When this King reigns, and reign he will, for it is the inviolable promise of the Father, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession;" when this comes to pass, and before long it will come to pass, then shall the promise contained in the text be fulfilled. Now, as to the manner wherein this is to be effected, we apprehend this is to be effected as set before us in the context. In the fifteenth verse you will see the period when these convulsions are to be terminated; when "the Spirit be poured upon

us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest; then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field." When the effusions of the Holy Ghost are poured out largely upon the church, I expect the reign of King Jesus to come; when it pleases God to work this in the church, then I shall expect the spread and accomplishment of this promise: when the church awakes from her slumbers, and cries mightily to God for deliverance, then shall these things come to pass: for till we are roused to wrestle with him, we have no right to expect the fulfilment of this promise. He puts it into the hearts of his people to pray for the realization of his promises, and then he gives unto them more than they require: and if ever I live to see the day when Christians are wrestling for the realization of God's promises, then I shall see the wilderness rejoicing and blossoming as the rose: then shall I behold the people of God dwelling in peaceable habitations, in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.

But what have we to do *individually* with this text? Do not suppose God designed these truths, great and glorious as they are, to be dealt with in a general way only; God meant them to be particular. And I put it to you, if you have never seen a glimpse of the glory and happiness of religion already; and, I affirm, it is not because the arm of the Lord is shortened—it is not because the resources of Jehovah are straitened; but because you are straitened in yourselves: live on high, and you shall not only live in safety, but also in comfort.

The personal improvement of this subject, consists first in directing you to *the safety of believers and their security*. Here I direct you to the Psalm that has comforted men in all ages, "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but they shall not harm thee, for this is the portion of the people of God and the heritage of his children." Peter, in reference to the same subject, says, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." Do not imagine that God has come to his last, that he can make no further effort for your deliverance. Why, Christian, let your trials be ever so great, and your circumstances ever so afflicting, your situation ever so complex, God knoweth how to deliver you out of them all. There is an old axiom in theology, and I am desirous you should bear it in mind—Man's extremity is God's opportunity. When we are coming to the last point of destitution, that is the time for the Lord to come forward and display his power, for our deliverance and his glory. Therefore, Christian, do not despair, do not be discouraged; write not bitter things against yourselves: remember who it is that has promised and declared, "All things shall work together for your good!" remember who has said, "In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee." Here is another great promise for the people of God, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper (it is God that makes, and the Spirit that furnishes the Christian with the weapons of his spiritual warfare); and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn." This is the heritage (it is not a mere matter of chance; every word is gold, yea, more precious than fine gold: it is not a thing that comes once in a century, it is not a casualty; it is) "the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

But our personal improvement standeth, also, *in the conduct becoming those who have so high a destiny*. For sure I am, that come what will in the world, as a believer, it shall be well with me. Does my faith begin to droop when I see the black cloud gathering? Do I begin to fear when I behold the dark combinations that are forming against religion? Let me see, I am in the ark; let my only concern be to know the Lord is my God, and I am his servant. What then? I shall be safe as Noah was when the flood destroyed the world: he was in safety, it destroyed not him. What then? I shall be in safety, as the children of Israel were, when the first-born of the Egyptians were destroyed. What then? I shall be in safety, as Lot was at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, for the Lord will take me out. What then? I shall be as safe as the Christians were at the destruction of Jerusalem, when the Romans razed it to the ground, and the Christians were taken away out of the desolation. Thus it has been, and thus it will continue to be, to the end of the world; the righteous will be taken away from the judgments to come. Do not suppose, however, that we are to sit lifeless, that is, in a lifeless manner on this account? No such thing. In this crisis the duty of the Christian is *prayer*, that is the one thing necessary; watch and pray, that it may go well with you: pray for yourselves, pray for your country.

Again, *be valiant for the truth*. You are soldiers of the Lamb: fight the good fight of faith; stand fast for the truth. A good soldier of the cross would say, "If I must die, let me die for God." O, remember if it should be ours to be dismissed from the body, by the strugglings we are called upon to endure for the truth, such struggles would only be preparations for our eternal happiness; as the flame enkindled around the dying martyr is only a preparation to lead his soul to God. What! if like our forefathers we are called upon to seal the truth with our blood; like them we shall be wafted in chariots of fire to the realms of glory. Courage! then, Christian; let all who have put on the Lord's livery, wear it boldly—let them go forth out of the camp bearing his reproach. The believing warrior has spiritual weapons for the conflict, he fights under the banner of Christ, he wages war against the Lord's enemies; and when he has proved victorious, he shall possess the kingdom of heaven. May God Almighty give grace unto you and to me, that we may go on in the Christian course, and stand fast and immovable unto the coming of our Lord. The duty of the Christian in the present day is a patient waiting and active exertion. We are not to be idle—we are not to be content with present watching and prayer: we are to do something as the instruments of God to bring about the glorious era, when all his enemies shall be had in derision, and the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of our Lord.

Again; It is your duty to *continue in persevering faith*. Let us not be sinking in heart, and turning away from religion. Now is the very time your religion will be tried, whether you have been mere formal professors, putting on the veil of religion, and possessing only its semblance, or no. Now your pretensions are about to be tried—the time is at hand when Christ will make it visible to angels, men, and devils, who are his and who are not. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall be tried; pray that your faith fail not; pray that you may have enlargements of this great grace: so will you be brought off finally more than conquerors.

## JACOB AT BETHEL.

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REV. J. PARSONS,

SURREY CHAPEL, JANUARY 9, 1836.

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“And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el.”—GENESIS, xxviii. 18, 19.

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THE history of the early patriarchs, my brethren, who lived at so remote a period from our own times, must be contemplated with deep interest, as it is adapted to our eminent profit. The value of the record respecting them does not arise so much from the exhibition which it presents of early customs and early manners, as from the light it sheds upon the character and dispensations of God, and the examples it presents of those holy dispositions and graces, in the cultivation of which alone man can derive his comfort, his honour, and his happiness. We have to look back upon those ancient worthies as being emphatically our *models*: and it is as the spirit of their actions becomes transfused into our own hearts, that we are interested as partakers with them in the glorious inheritance of the promises.

There is now brought before you a symbolical action performed by the patriarch Jacob, from meditating upon the purport of which, under the blessing of God, much of profit and advantage will doubtless be derived. On his way from the house of his father, for the purpose of obtaining security against the vengeance of a disappointed brother, he had a remarkable visitation of spirits from the heavenly world, to which we shall soon more distinctly refer. When the vision terminated with the waking hour, Jacob exclaimed, “Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el.”

In examining the action which in this manner was performed, we shall find it indicative of the state of mind felt by the patriarch in three important classifications. Here was commemoration; here was dedication; and here was anticipation. These are what we now intend to illustrate, trusting that these reflections may mould you into the state of the patriarch, and that thus may be secured the highest welfare of your own souls.

We must observe, first, that in the action of the patriarch there was **COMMEMORATION**. It was clearly his design in erecting this pillar, to commemorate the events which had recently transpired in his history, and, as far as possible

to give permanence to their remembrance. Before the invention, or the general use of the art of writing, the commemoration of remarkable events by monumental pillars appeared the most apt and the most effectual that could be designed: and this mode, therefore, of giving permanence to great events, is a custom also very generally practised among the nations of antiquity. Without referring you to different examples which might easily be adduced from profane history, we must turn your attention, for the purpose of illustration, to one or two of those instances which occur in the sacred writings. It may be observed, for instance, that upon a period subsequent to the one which is now before you, when Jacob was making a solemn and a permanent league with Laban (as we are informed in the thirty-first chapter of this book), that "Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap; and they did eat there upon the heap. And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed. And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed." It may be observed again, as you find in the thirty-fifth chapter of this book, the fourteenth verse, after another remarkable manifestation of God, that "Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink-offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon." At a still subsequent period, when the children of Israel had achieved the passage of Jordan, they resorted, by the command of Joshua, to the same mode of commemoration. We find in the fourth chapter of the book of Joshua, the fourth and following verses, that "Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man: and Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of Jordan, and take you up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel: that this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? then ye shall answer them, that the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever. And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the Lord spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there," says the historian "unto this day." And once more, when a remarkable victory had been achieved over the hostile Philistines, as it is recorded in 1 Samuel, vii. 12, "Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

Now, my brethren, the principle of the action which in this manner has been illustrated, is one doubtless deserving of universal recognition and observance—namely, that the mercies which man receives from God ought always to be preserved in vivid and in grateful remembrance. Although now we erect no monumental pillars, and although now we chisei not on those pillars any

hieroglyphical symbols, yet we ought to cherish in our hearts the sacred recollection of the goodness we have received. That our past career has in every case been a career of mercy, and that we have all received the bounty of our common Father, is a fact which it is impossible not to admit; and of which in our remembrance, no time and no change should exhaust the tenderness and the mercy; but it should continue supreme and paramount, until we are permitted to unite in the higher commemorations of that world where mercy will be consummated in salvation.

But let us advert more distinctly to the nature of those mercies which it was the object of the patriarch to commemorate, and which permits a direct application to ourselves.

You will observe, in the first instance, that here was clearly a commemoration of *providential favour*. It was perfectly impossible for the patriarch to overlook the preservation of his life throughout the course of past years, and especially the security he had recently been permitted to obtain from an impending and fearful danger: and his emotions with regard to Divine Providence were doubtless heightened and strengthened by the nature of the remarkable visitation which he had just received; a visitation in which God rendered to him the assurance of continued temporal favour and of augmented temporal blessings. "Behold," saith God, in the fifteenth verse, "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." My brethren, that our own history comprehends within it providential mercies of vast amount and incalculable worth, who that reflects is not instantly and delightfully conscious? Let each now in the sanctuary endeavour to retrace distinctly and vividly the course of past events, as they have transpired in relation to ourselves; let each endeavour to go through the various stages of childhood and youth, of manhood and of age: let each ponder, how the Being, who might have smitten and destroyed, has moved his arm and exerted his power but to bestow, to adorn, and to bless: and then surely the acknowledgment will be due by every tongue, as it should be felt by every heart, "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life." To commemorate that mercy and that goodness, and to strive that it may remain in permanent and vivid recollection, is a duty both imperative and delightful: and you must not but acknowledge, my hearers, that forgetfulness is a guilt against which at last justice will launch the terrors of her vengeance, and consign the perpetrator to a world where it will be found the embodying of all torments, that there God will be gracious no more.

Here was also the commemoration of *spiritual blessings*. The vision which the patriarch had received upon this remarkable night was undoubtedly an assurance and a sign to him of spiritual blessings. The title of Jacob to the possession of spiritual blessings, as it descended in the order of the patriarchal covenant, had been immediately obtained by the purchase of the birth-right. And on this memorable occasion connected with the text, God appeared in his covenant character, for the purpose of confirming to him his personal interest in the mercies and the promises of grace. Observe the symbol which occurs in the vision, and which you find recorded in the twelfth verse. We are informed that he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the

sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." Here was, indeed, a representation of the mode of reconciled communication between God and man in the work of the Mediator, given to us by the vision of the ladder, and the active subserviency of all angelic beings, for the purpose of their instrumentality, of promoting the glorious ends for which that work of mediation was designed. In immediate identification with the mediatorial scheme, Jehovah himself appeared for the purpose of revealing his character and his promise: "And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Now, my brethren, this was indeed, as you will perceive by referring to the twelfth, the fifteenth, and the seventeenth chapters of the book of Genesis, a representation of the covenant of grace as it was made to Abraham: and his descendant doubtless interpreted it as being the pledge and assurance of his own federal and personal interest in the work of the Messiah, and in a better, that is a heavenly, country. It was the nature of the revelation that doubtless gave interest and fervour to the commemoration which on this occasion he was engaged in.

There are doubtless not a few in this assembly, who, in the riches of sovereign mercy, have been brought to sustain the same spiritual relation as that which was sustained by the patriarch, and who are themselves to be regarded as heirs of the covenant of grace. The blessing of Abraham has come upon you in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ: the work of mediation has been applied to you in all the glory of its redeeming power. You are reconciled and justified by faith. Through Him in whom you have believed you have access by one Spirit unto the Father. You form a part of his adopted family, upon whom he wills to bestow the choicest possessions of his love; and heavenly spirits are your ministers; and salvation is your end; and you are soon to receive the consummation of your portion in the heavenly kingdom, in the inheritance which is "incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away." As all Christians are partakers in this matchless and unparalleled blessing, so from all Christians the work of commemoration is especially and peculiarly claimed. And when we contemplate the extent to which we have been adorned, and enriched, and exalted, how must we cherish the memory of unnumbered mercies; how must we lament the present imperfection of our souls; and how must we long for the period when those souls shall pour forth their praises in the glory of that heaven whither we are tending! O let all those who now hear me seek more of personal enjoyment in these high communications of grace; and let life be considered but vanity, until providence shall be crowned by redemption—until each tongue can utter the announcement—"He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure for this is all my salvation, and all my desire."



We have thus, my brethren, illustrated the first department which the state of the patriarch's mind presents: in the action there was *commemoration*.

We now require your attention to observe, secondly, that in the action of the patriarch there was *DEDICATION*. It will be observed "he took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it:" the oil being the sign, not merely that he dedicated the pillar for the purpose of commemoration, but that he also dedicated himself to the service and glory of that God from whom his mercies had been received. The self-dedication of the patriarch, as symbolized by the pouring of the oil on the top of the pillar as a commemoration, is beautifully narrated in the closing verses of the chapter: "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

This act of the patriarch, my brethren, very clearly and beautifully sets forth the duty of the children of men in the review and retrospect of mercies which they have received from God—even the duty of dedicating themselves wholly to his praise and to his glory. You may remember what a beautiful example of the performance of this duty, under similar circumstances, is presented to us in the case of David, as recorded in Psalm cxvi. The Psalmist there records the wonderful mercies which he had experienced from God in "delivering his soul from death, his eyes from tears, and his feet from falling:" and he exclaims, in the twelfth verse, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. O Lord, truly I am thy servant" (or, "I dedicate myself to be thy servant"); "I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid—thou hast loosed my bonds" (or, "I am persuaded to dedicate myself as thy servant, because thou hast loosed my bonds"). "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord." You may remember also how beautifully the Apostle of the Gentiles impresses the importance of the duty arising from a previous contemplation of the blessings of the covenant of grace. His first request, after summing up the amount and the extent of those privileges, is, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." And again: "Ye are bought with the price: therefore glorify God in your bodies and your souls, which are his." The point, my brethren, to which I desire to bring you is this: that there is not a mercy which you have received in the past times of your lives, and of which it becomes you to encourage diligent and permanent remembrance, but what may be regarded as having an eye, and a tongue, and a voice, and a manner, reiterating and still reiterating, the call upon you—"Yield yourselves unto God."

Let me request you now, under this part of the subject, with greater distinctness, to observe in what this dedication consists, and under what circumstances this dedication is especially appropriate.

Observe *in what this dedication consists*. It must be regarded, of course as founded upon a recognition by men of the right of God, the Author of all their mercies, to the entire possession of whatever they possess, and of whatever they are; and comprehends within it certain resolutions which are intended to constitute a permanent state of heart and life. For example: it comprehends a resolution that there shall be firm and unbending adherence to the truths which God has revealed; and whatever principles he is found to have announced for your cordial acceptance and belief, will be cordially embraced and adhered to. Again: it involves a resolution that there shall be anxious and diligent cultivation of the holiness which God has commanded; and whatever are the requirements of his law for governing the deportment and the affections of men, so as to conform them to his own image—these will be sincerely and cheerfully obeyed. Again: it comprehends the resolution that there shall be public and solemn union with the people whom he has redeemed; and whatever external ordinances and public professions have been appointed by divine authority, as the pledge and the sign of that union, will be at once and readily performed; so that it may be seen by those around that the decision pronounced by Ruth has been taken in the highest and most spiritual sense with regard to those who constitute the church of the living God: “Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.” And then it involves a resolution that there shall be zealous and persevering activity for the cause which God has established; and whatever objects God has determined upon and announced for the purpose of extending his authority and restoring his glory in this apostate and long disordered world—these will be studiously and diligently pursued. There will be the rendering of time, there will be the rendering of talent, and the rendering (which is often the hardest of all) of property, for the purpose of carrying on those designs of mercy, which are not to terminate till the whole world shall be brought back to its allegiance to the Almighty. These, my brethren, is man called upon to give, and in the spirit in which the disciples remembered the saying, and applied it to the Redeemer: “The zeal of the Lord’s house hath eaten me up.”

Such, my hearers, is to be regarded as distinctly and obviously the nature of that dedication which man is required to render in return for the mercies which he has received from his God: the entire devotion of body and soul to his praise. And I would ask you to-night, Is the demand exorbitant? Are we called on to render a disproportionate and half-hearted acknowledgment? Does not God deserve it? And after the utmost devotedness we have yielded, have we not to confess that we come almost infinitely short of our duties and our obligations? My brethren, fully and freely we must admit the claim, acknowledging that the homage of eternity itself will never enable us to repay and discharge the duty which we owe; and that throughout the whole of eternity

it will be our employment, as our honour, to confess, in humility and in praise, that we are not worthy the least of all his mercies.

There is a second inquiry, which must be regarded as intimately connected with this; namely, *under what circumstances this dedication is peculiarly appropriate.* The spirit of dedication, as the result of the mercies with which God has been pleased to surround us, must properly be considered as furnishing and constituting what ought to be the habitual condition of man. There is not a pulse that beats, nor is there a throb that palpitates in the hand or in the heart, but what ought to remind every one amongst us that we should write upon ourselves "*Corban*"—a gift upon the altar of God.

There are circumstances which sometimes peculiarly occur in the course of life, when it seems especially appropriate that the dedication should be undertaken, or, if already undertaken, that it should be renovated and renewed. We may, for example, mention seasons when new and extraordinary mercies have been received from God. As we have said, the pillar of Jacob was erected, and the vow was undertaken, after a striking manifestation of the loving-kindness and mercy of Jehovah: and ourselves, my brethren, when we have received new mercies in the course of providence, in many of those varied modes of bestowment which you are well aware providence is enabled to operate in; or when in grace we have received new spiritual communications which gladden our hearts in the prospect of our final redemption; then the first impulse of our spirits should be, after the reception of favours either in providence or grace, to say with David, "I will go to the altar of God, of God my exceeding joy;" and there, not with cheerfulness merely, but with joy, present ourselves with the vow that we will live entirely unto the Lord.

We may mention, again, the seasons when new and extraordinary manifestations have occurred in the course of human existence. Here, for example, are the seasons when we constitute and enter into new domestic or social connexions; the seasons when we commemorate the days of our birth, or the seasons when we mark the lapse of time by passing from one closing year to the commencement of another. My brethren, it must be observed, that whenever any such seasons as those to which we have briefly adverted do occur in the experience of any or of all, that then the impulses are strong, and that then the calls are loud, and that then to refuse the dedication to God must be regarded as a new sign of the stupidity and the obduracy of that depravity which reigns in paramount ruin in the hearts of the children of men. My brethren, do I now speak to one amongst you by whom new and extraordinary mercies in providence or in grace have been received? Do I speak to any amongst you who have recently entered into the formation of new domestic or social connexions? Do I speak to one amongst you who is commemorating the day of birth, or any other day which is considered as remarkable in the past career of human existence? I would entreat you to imitate the example of the patriarch, and regard this as the period when your review of what is past, and your feeling of what has just transpired, will bring you to dedicate yourselves to the glory of that God by whom your breath is given, and on whom your mercies depend. We have but recently made our transition from one year to the commencement of another; and if there have been in the minds

of those who are now present any feelings excited of the importance of greater attention to the stupendous duties of religion, let me request them to consider that the time has not gone by when that event may be improved by what will require the devotedness of the spirit and the deportment to the living God. I am anxious, supremely anxious, to bring you to the conclusion; and I would to God that I had an acquaintance with the precise circumstances of all the persons who constitute this assembly, that I might refer to every thing in the course of your private experience which might be construed, justly and legitimately, into an argument why you should thus devote yourselves on the altar of service to the glory of your God. But there is One who knows those circumstances, and there is One who knows what his claims are; and there is One who will vindicate the majesty of his claim, either in the redemption or the final punishment of your souls. But, my brethren, we would bring you to that state of mind in which alone you should be summoned to exist. As you have been called to take a retrospect of the mercies and the innumerable kindnesses by which the course of your past lives has been distinguished, so, with one accord, you should rush round the altar, and there give to God your hearts, saying, as did David, "Take the sacrifice, and bind it with cords, even to the altar." See, my brethren, that you endeavour to live in the spirit of those beautiful verses of one of our most eminent Christian poets:

"How happy all thy servants are!  
How great thy grace to me!  
My life, which thou hast made thy care,  
Lord, I devote to thee.

"Here in thy courts I leave my vow,  
And thy rich grace record:  
Witness, ye saints who hear me now,  
If I forsake the Lord."

This, my brethren, is the second deportment, which the action teaches us, of the state of mind of the patriarch, that of *dedication*. There is yet a third view, to which we must refer. In the action of the patriarch there was *ANTICIPATION*. The whole of the passage which is before us distinctly announces that, in connexion with *the retrospect of the past*, there was, in the memorial of the patriarch, *the anticipation of the future*. Nor can we look upon the monumental pillar which he had erected, without finding that it was not merely a commemoration, but a prophecy; and that from the past he hurried his thoughts onward and still onward into the dark and almost impalpable future, showing him the destinies of his temporal prosperity in distant ages, especially exhibiting to him the day of Him whom Abraham rejoiced to see and was glad; and raising his thoughts above the scenes of this sublunary state to the enjoyment of that better country, that is, a heavenly, into which he knew his spiritual seed would be exalted, through the boundless mercy of God.

And, my brethren, those of us who *have* performed the act of dedication to our God, and are desirous of preserving the spirit of dedication as long as life shall last, are called on to connect our commemoration and our dedication with a spirit of anticipation, from which we shall find our highest and purest emotions to be derived.

Observe, that our expectation must involve *future good in time*. Having rendered yourselves to the service of that Jehovah who has conjured us by his past mercies, we have nothing before us, my brethren, in the prospect of the future, but calmness and peace. It is so in *providence*. Affliction, poverty, bereavement, disease, "the rich man's scorn, the proud man's contumely," the worst storms and buffetings of "outrageous fortune"—these, separately or accumulated, form no drawback or hinderance to the enjoyment of the blessings we have announced. No, my brethren, these very things themselves, in consequence of our covenant connexion with our God, are transformed, possess a new aspect; not rising before us like demons and fiends of terror, but like ministering angels, only to wing us nearer and nearer to our God, and to bring us nearer and nearer to his reward. Nor is there one who, in reviewing past mercies, which his God has rendered him, and who has been able to dedicate himself to the service of that God in return, who cannot rest in the prospect of the future, on that one stupendous, glorious announcement of the apostle, "All things shall work together for good to them that love God."

And then, in the sphere of *grace*, what can we anticipate with regard to the future in the *present* life, but those enjoyments which "make rich," and can "add no sorrow!" We anticipate that we shall be kept; that we shall receive larger communications of knowledge, of holiness, of love, and of zeal; that we shall receive additional and nearer visions of Jehovah in spiritual intercourse and fellowship with him; and that we shall be made more and more like unto Him who was given "that he might be the first-born among many brethren;" becoming etherealized in our own nature, and made thus to partake of the beginning of heaven below.

Nor can we anticipate but that when the *end* of our pilgrimage is come, we shall go and stand by the side of the rolling stream of Jordan; not terrified nor shrinking back, as we behold it bear upon its flood the wrecks of departed beauty and departed power; for we shall find the ark of the covenant there, and the glory of the Shekinah there; and no sooner shall the foot touch the stream than the waters, as by magic power, shall cleave asunder, and will permit us to pass dry-shod through the deep, exclaiming, in triumphant language, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And so, to use the language of Bunyan, we may anticipate that "all the trumpets shall sound for us from the other side."

And, my brethren, the future good which we may anticipate in time, must be also connected with the fact, that we must anticipate future good *throughout immortality*. My brethren, there is not a blessing in providence or in grace received by one who, as the result of an enlightened retrospect, has dedicated himself to the service of God, but what must be considered as a pledge and foretaste, a decisive promise of higher and more holy and extatic blessings which are reserved beyond the grave. My Christian brethren, here arises the choicest nobility of the state in which we exist. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, which we can anticipate on this side the grave, but what we must also anticipate and receive as a token of what is to follow when time to us shall be no more: just as the bud is the promise of the flower, as the

first-fruit is the promise of the harvest, and as the first tender streaks of the dawn are the promise of the burning splendours of the perfect and the meridian day. We have no dim outline and sketch of the scenes which are to be displayed in the palpable glories of their reality, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. We look, my brethren, from the type to the antetype; from the Canaan which is earthly to the Canaan which is heavenly: and soon, when we have suffered the allotments of our mortality, shall we possess a peace and plenitude of anticipation, in the fruition of the beatific vision. Thus shall we stand justified in the presence of assembled worlds, crowned with imperishable laurels by Him who has gathered them from the unfading bowers of Paradise itself, ushered to the high companionship of an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, brought near the vision of that glory before which seraphs have veiled their wings; having in our hearts the fulness of joy, and around us the pleasures which are for ever: and so shall we be for ever with the Lord! This is the end of our anticipations—"the glory which shall be revealed"—"the building of God;" "the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" "the new Jerusalem;" when God shall pitch his tabernacle with men; when there shall be no sorrow, nor pain, nor death; when the former things shall be passed away; and when all things shall become new.

Thus we have endeavoured to present to you the principles of illustration, rightly arising from this beautiful narrative regarding the symbolic action of one of the primeval fathers of the Church. His state of mind in erecting a monumental pillar exhibits *commemoration*—the commemoration of providential favours and of spiritual blessings. It exhibits *dedication*—the dedication of himself solemnly by a vow to the service and the glory of his God. And it exhibits *anticipation*; shewing that those who are inheritors of the spiritual promises like him, are enabled to anticipate in connexion with this dedication, future good in time, and future good in immortality.

And now, my brethren, in closing this address, let me present two calls to those who, perhaps, constitute a large proportion of this assembly. The first call is one to *immediate repentance*. For how many are now beneath the eye of God, beneath this roof, upon whom that God has showered countless and invaluable mercies; and who never yet have turned the heart with aught of the emotion of sincere thanksgiving to the Giver! I speak to aged persons who are guilty; persons in the dignified maturity of manhood who are guilty; young persons who are guilty: and their consciences tell them now, that if the preacher has been right in defining the nature of dedication to God as being an universal duty, that duty has never been performed, but has been wholly neglected by them. God was with you when you lay little infants in your mothers' arms: he was with you, as from the season of childhood you emerged into the yet more perilous season of youth, and launched amid the temptations and seductions of a world which appeared every where decorated with sincerity and charm. He was with you when you passed from youth to the business and the maturity of manhood, and when you entered amid all the perplexities and cares by which you sought to obtain comfort, and prosperity, and wealth. He was with you when you passed from the scene of manhood down to the period

of age, when the blossoms of the grave began to shew themselves upon your brow, and the grasshopper began to be a burden, and desire to fail, and the tottering frame to give testimony that ere long you should go down to the shadows of death. And yet there has been no return! My dear hearers, in these different classes of life, will you permit me to commend to your attention one inquiry, and to request that that one inquiry may be pondered by you as it stands in holy writ, when you have gone from this house to-night, which you will find in the second chapter of the epistle to the Romans, the fourth and fifth verses. "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee"—or is intended to lead thee—"to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Will you despise it? Will you treasure up that wrath against the last day? Ah! who can dwell with the devouring fire, or who can dwell with the everlasting burnings? My brethren, it is by the horrors of that everlasting burning, on the one hand, as by the charms of that heaven which by devotion to God you may obtain, on the other hand, if you will, that I do conjure you now to a spirit of repentance. *Now* let the tear flow; *now* let the sigh heave; and *now* let the heart be broken; and *now* come to God, saying, "A broken spirit, and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

In connexion with our call to immediate repentance, we must also present a call to *immediate dedication and devotedness to God*, by which alone repentance can be testified and can be confirmed. My brethren, the amount of my appeal is this (and I think I have spoken so plainly to-night that the most unlettered may understand)—I say, the amount of my appeal is this, that as responsible and immortal beings, who in every instance have received numberless mercies, of one of the least of which you were utterly unworthy you will not depart from any of the portals by which you may retire from this sanctuary to-night, without having uttered your vow, and given your heart unto God. "May I not delay till *to-morrow*?" My brethren, the Gospel has no commission for to-morrow: every one of its invitations is for *to-day*. "*To-day* if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts." "*To-day*, lest ye should be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." "*To-day*, lest he should swear in his wrath ye shall not enter into my rest." To-morrow! How many ere to-morrow may be in another world! No, brethren, we stand upon the principles of our religion, and we say, "*Now* is the accepted time; *this* is the day of salvation." And there is a voice sounding to-night in tones of soft and celestial attraction, addressing all the hesitating and the undecided, "My son! give me thine heart. My daughter! give me thine heart." Who asks it? God—your Father, your Preserver, your Benefactor, your Judge. "My son, give me thine heart." Who amongst you, my hearers, will venture to refuse? Is there one who will start aside and deny the entreaty of his God? Ponder for a moment, and as you ponder, decide. Shall I pause—and wait?

Brethren, it is a solemn crisis. Pledges are given—and are refused; hearts are rendered—or are refused; and *now* spirits have bowed themselves to the service of God with the prospect of immortality—or spirits have hardened themselves

JACOB AT BETHEL.

in yet more adamantine strength that they may be "destroyed without remedy." How dreadful is this place! It is none other than the house of God, it is the gate of heaven.

My brethren, words would but enfeeble the climax whither we have conducted you: and now, all must be left between your consciences and your God. One fact, however, is certain—the day shall declare it—and the result of this night's invocation will either be seen and commemorated amid the rapturous hallelujahs of heaven, or they will be seen and commemorated amid the wailings, and the groanings, and the agonies of hell.—And where—where—where shall be the eternal commemoration *from you?* Answer the inquiry in your closets, and before God.



## THE NEW WINE OF THE KINGDOM.

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REV. J. PARSONS,

SURREY CHAPEL, JANUARY 17, 1836.

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"But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."—MATTHEW, xxvi. 29.

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THE history of our Lord Jesus Christ on this earth was not so much an exhibition of power as it was an exhibition of tenderness. Some of his miracles we know were indeed performed at his bidding, unfolding his absolute possession of the control over the elements: but all his miracles were of such a nature as to testify the subserviency of omnipotence to the claims of benevolence and love. And these attributes, as displayed throughout the whole of his life, were most touching and most delightful; nor can any one ponder on them without rendering to them the noblest tribute of the human heart, in homage, in gratitude, and in love. The intercourse of our Redeemer, my brethren, with those who were more immediately his followers is, beyond his ordinary communications, an illustration of the benevolence of his heart; and in the last scenes, especially, which transpired between them previous to his crucifixion, there are beautiful exhibitions of its most intense and sublime exercise, the most powerful developments of the rich treasures of that love which passeth knowledge.

The words recorded for your meditation you will observe to have been uttered by the Saviour in one of his closest scenes of fellowship; and when they are viewed in their import and in their connexion, they will be found amply to justify the estimate we have formed, and the expressions we have employed. We find that in the immediate prospect of his betrayal and his sufferings, he gathered his followers in solemn and holy assembly; and in sweet and affectionate converse, celebrated with them the Passover, one of the most renowned festivals of the Jews. To his approaching sufferings and death and their results, all his miracles and all his actions were made to tend. It was as he administered the paschal cup—the import of which we shall soon find so momentous—that he spake this beautiful sentiment: "I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Those amongst you who are about to engage in the sacramental service of this morning—an engagement formed with a delightful and a solemn purpose—will find these words especially and peculiarly appropriate: but they must not merely be taken in their application to you, but as also presenting most important principles for the attention of the whole of this congregation.

It is our purpose, in the first place, to contemplate the words of the Saviour, as they regard the action in which himself and his followers were then engaged: and, secondly, to contemplate the words of the Saviour as they regard the events which he taught his followers to anticipate.

First, contemplate the words of the Saviour, as they regard **THE ACT IN WHICH HIMSELF AND HIS FOLLOWERS WERE THEN ENGAGED.** They were drinking of "the fruit," or more properly "the product," "of the vine." Their use of this beverage, you will understand, was not a mere ordinary social communion: it was, as we have stated, in direct connexion with the Passover, the annual celebration of the Jewish Passover, in respect to which it may be proper at once to afford some brief explanation.

The feast of the Passover, or as it is frequently called in later times, "the feast of unleavened bread," originated with the deliverance of the people of Israel from their long-continued bondage in the land of Egypt. When Jehovah was about to inflict his last plague upon the Egyptians, the destruction of the first-born by the sword of his destroying angel, the Israelites were directed to take a lamb, one for each house, the blood of which, after the animal was slain, was to be sprinkled upon the door-posts of the dwelling; and the flesh of which, being roasted with fire, was to be eaten by the family with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. When the destroyer, going forth upon his awful mission, beheld the blood on the door-posts, he was to recognize it as the symbol of deliverance, and pass over the habitation without inflicting his stroke; and then, at the appointed signal, amidst the prostration of their bereaved and terrified oppressors, the chosen and the ransomed nation were to go forth to the inheritance promised to their forefathers. The periodical celebration of this great event was ordained (with all its circumstances) to be continued among the Jews to the latest period of their national existence.

Now, my brethren, such was the feast, which at the appointed period, and with the accustomed ceremonies, the Redeemer was celebrating with his followers at the time when he uttered the expression of the text. But it must be understood, that the Saviour, in convening the solemn assembly of his followers, did not intend to honour a Jewish rite as commemorating a national deliverance; he intended to set forth that rite as being essentially typical, and as holding a relationship to him, and to the economy of which he was the founder and the head, the importance of which was to be attested, not merely by the ages of time, but throughout the whole duration of eternity.

There are two remarks to which our attention must now be called after this general explanation, by which you find the act of our Redeemer was to be considered as fully imperative.

First, you will observe, that the Lord Jesus led his followers to regard the Passover as *being representative of his mediatorial sufferings and death.* Nothing, certainly, can be more distinct than the import of the scriptural record, that all the ceremonies of the paschal celebration were so many signs of the momentous mediatorial influences identified, which are to arise from the sufferings which the Saviour was about to endure. For example: did he not teach his disciples to consider the water provided for the customary ablutions of the priest, with which he washed his disciples' feet, as signifying the spiritual purification to be performed by him on the human soul, saying to one of the

brethren assembled "If I wash thee not thou hast no part in me?" Did he not lead his followers to consider the broken bread as signifying the corporeal bruises and the crushing agonies he was about to endure on their behalf, stating "This is my body, broken for you?" Did he not again teach them to consider the wine as signifying the blood he was about to shed, emphatically as a propitiation for sin, stating, "This is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins?" And besides the personal appropriation which was made by the Saviour himself, do we not find that those who wrote by his mandate, and who were impelled by his inspiration, also set forth the Lamb of the Passover as being a specific and more signal type of his approaching and intended sacrifice, stating, that "Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us;" that he is "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world;" and that "he is the Lamb without blemish and without spot," by whose propitiatory blood man is redeemed from the sword of the destroyer? It is thus, my brethren, as you will at once perceive, that the whole of the paschal ordinance was intended to illustrate and confirm that great doctrine of the Christian faith, I mean the doctrine of the Saviour's atonement; that atonement by which the various shadows of the Levitical law were to be finally consummated and abolished; that atonement which had been decreed in the councils of eternity; that atonement intended as a gracious provision for the rescue of an apostate and ruined world; that atonement, the merit of which, when appropriated through the instrumentality of faith, is intended to secure to the guilty and to the lost the enjoyment of reconciliation, of acceptance, and of final glory; that atonement, apart from which all mercy is banished, and every hope must die, and man, abandoned without a refuge, must be left to the stroke of inflexible vengeance, and to the curse of everlasting despair.

But, secondly, it must be observed, the Saviour led his followers to consider the Passover as *originating an ordinance to be perpetuated for important purposes throughout all ages of the Christian church.* The celebration of the Passover by the Saviour upon the memorable occasion which is now presented for your regard, was undoubtedly the first example of a rite which was to remain in connexion with the economy of which the Lord Jesus Christ was the founder; a rite retaining so much of the Jewish ceremony as consisted in the distribution and the participation of the bread and wine; and a rite which, under the name of "the Lord's Supper," was intended to be preserved at stated and convenient intervals amongst his disciples to the end of the world. The occasion which is now before us we regard undoubtedly as being the time of transfer and the time of institution. That such was really the intention of the Saviour is perfectly clear from the record which we find in the 1st Corinthians, xi. where the apostle Paul affirms the Christian rite to a Gentile church. "For I have received," says the Apostle, "of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

This passage, my brethren, we consider to be perfectly decisive with regard

to the intended permanence of the ordinance; and it must be observed, that its spiritual import is clearly and distinctly as follows. It was intended to shew to the world, that the people of Christ really possess a personal interest in his atoning sufferings and death. It was intended to shew that they are virtually united by their faith to himself, and through him to each other, being members of the Saviour's body, and his flesh and his bones. It was intended to shew that they cherished a grateful and affectionate remembrance of the sufferings and agonies which he had endured that they might never die; and that they cheerfully and eagerly anticipated the arrival of another time, when the Redeemer should come again in his covenant splendours, for the purpose of perfecting the glorious work of their triumph and their eternal salvation. It is the direct obligation (and I am glad of this public opportunity of calling attention to the fact)—it is, I say, the direct obligation of every one who has placed his entire dependence, as a guilty sinner, on the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, to evince his state and his emotion, by uniting in the celebration of the Saviour's love. None but such as these should dare to approach the Christian passover; for "whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation" (or rather, *condemnation*) "to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." But wherever there is the right and legitimate evidence of repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then let the profession be rendered, and then let the vow be performed.

Nor must we be regarded as advocating the claims of an ordinance which has no operation or immediate connexion with the welfare of those who receive it. The benefits which it is the instrument of conveying to the followers of Christ, are such as must commend it to their most affectionate and constant regard. It is adapted to enkindle in their bosoms a yet warmer flame of attachment to Him who died for them and rose again. It is adapted to purge their affections from all the dross of worldly appetite and passion, enabling them to be crucified with Christ, and to walk in newness of life. It is adapted to strengthen the bond of brotherly concord and peace among those who constitute the Christian church. It is adapted to impart comfort and consolation in the hour of feebleness and of sorrow. It is adapted to elevate the minds of men into most refined and immediate intercourse and communion with God. It is adapted to set before us the most glowing, and beautiful, and delightful anticipations of that future state of happiness, where the people of the Saviour are to be assembled in glory for ever. Well, my brethren, then, may we exult in the means of grace, which our Redeemer, in his dying command, has placed before us. Well may we exclaim with gratitude—

"Blest Jesus, what delicious fare!  
How sweet thine entertainments are!"

Well may we preserve it and cherish it, as being our best and choicest provision, until the arrival of that higher period, when we shall be received into other scenes, and there behold our Redeemer as he is.

We trust, from these brief remarks, you now understand the nature of the act in which the Saviour and his followers were engaged. He was celebrating

with them the ordinance of the Jewish Passover; and he taught them to consider the Passover as representative of his atoning sufferings and death; and, at the same time, as originating an ordinance to be perpetually observed throughout all the ages of the Christian church.

Let us now proceed, as we proposed, to contemplate the words of the Saviour, as they regard the EVENTS HE TAUGHT HIS FOLLOWERS TO ANTICIPATE. "I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." There are two events which must here claim our notice; an event of speedy separation, and an event of ultimate re-union.

First, you will observe, the Saviour taught his followers to anticipate *an event of approaching separation*. When he said to them, "I will not henceforth drink of the fruit of the vine until" a certain period, which is afterwards referred to, he intimated, of course, the fact that he and his disciples were about to part. The fact of his parting, and that this was a farewell season of communion, is sometimes very tenderly represented by him to his disciples in his conversations with them, which are more fully and largely recorded in the Gospel according to John, xiii. 33—36; xvi. 4—7. And without the slightest difficulty, the coldest and the dullest may easily imagine what would be the feelings of the men as they were told that they were about to separate from Him whose communion with them had been so sweet; and how perturbed and agitated would be their bosoms as they received the cup which contained the farewell pledge—as they gazed on the form which was so soon to disappear—and as they listened to the accents of the voice which was so soon to fade and die away from their ear. Yet thus was it appointed, and thus was it fulfilled: that very night began the time of the accomplishment: "They sung a hymn" (and what a hymn must that have been, in which the voice of Jesus was heard to utter its music with theirs!) Then he addressed them—"Arise, let us go hence;" and they went to the Mount of Olives. The Lord was agonized—he was betrayed—he was led away—he was accused—he was condemned—he was scourged—was clothed with purple—was crowned with thorns—went to Calvary, bearing his cross—was crucified—died—and was buried. After a short interval he burst the bars of the sepulchre, and came forth as the conqueror of death, showing himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs; and then, after forty days, the clouds of heaven became his garments, and he ascended to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God: and there he reigns at the right hand of the Majesty on High—never, corporeally, as the Saviour, to come to tabernacle among men again. His church, in their different communions, and through different ages, have celebrated the Passover as he was pleased to appoint; but never has the Lord been there: the Master of the feast has necessarily and always been away. No breeze has ever wafted the fragrance from him: no seraph has ever brought messages from him: no fiery chariot has ever brought visits from him. He listens to nobler strains than ours; he receives nobler homage and adoration than ours; and *there*, in the presence of the Father, and surrounded by the millions of spirits which kept their first estate, or who from human race have been redeemed, he listens to the chanting of the everlasting anthem, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength,

and honour, and glory, and blessing." And *there* shall he reside, unseen by mortal eye, until the blast of the archangel's trumpet shall announce the consummation of all things. And what, my Christian brethren, should be the result of the Redeemer's departure and separation from us? Why, that we in our spirits, while here, should wend our way to him, and repose the love of our heart upon the place, and mode, and scenes where he resides. Hear the voice which comes to you now with mighty, and almost overwhelming power "If then ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your lives are hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Brethren, this day I call upon you to arise; and let every true Christian also call upon his spirit to arise: "Arise and depart, this is not your rest: it is polluted."

"Rise my soul and stretch thy wings,  
Thy better portion trace;  
Rise from transitory things  
To heaven thy native place.  
Sun, and moon, and stars decay;  
Time shall soon this earth remove;  
Rise, my soul, and haste away,  
To seats prepared above."

But again, you will observe, while the Redeemer taught his disciples to anticipate an event of speedy separation, he taught them also to anticipate *an event of ultimate re-union*. "I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." The apostles were distinctly taught, that although, for a season, they were to be separated from their Lord, there was to be a meeting again in circumstances of gladness and of joy. There are some, we are aware, by whom the promise is confined to the apostles alone. But we have abundant reason for extending it to others, as it comprehends all those who believe on the Saviour through their words in every age of time: the same destination shall be their's and the same happiness shall be their's. There are two facts connected with this ultimate meeting to which your attention must now be addressed.

You will observe *all the followers of the Saviour shall be brought to "the Father's kingdom."* This is one fact which is clearly and distinctly promised. By "the Father's kingdom," there are some who understand nothing more than the Gospel dispensation, as it was to be established after the resurrection of the Saviour from the dead, and by the outpouring of the Spirit. We may object to this interpretation, that the Gospel dispensation is not "the kingdom of the Father," but that it is "the kingdom of the Son:" and further, that in the language of Scripture in the New Testament, the phrase "kingdom of the Father," is presented to us as being emphatically and distinctly *the heavenly world*. There are two examples contained in the Gospel from which we now address you. The one example we find in the conclusion of the parable of the tares. You will there remark that the Saviour sets forth the time of everlasting destiny, at the conclusion of the world. "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire;

there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." And again, we remark, how the Saviour speaks of the final welcome to be pronounced on the blessed: the invitation is, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you"—doubtless by him for you—"from the foundation of the world:" and the righteous shall enter into "life eternal." It will be therefore observed, without further argumentation, that we have good ground for considering, that when the Saviour speaks of "the Father's kingdom," he means the celestial world.

Without detaining you by noticing the reasons particularly, on account of which the heavenly world is presented to us as the Father's kingdom, I would proceed to remark, that the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, of which the paschal rite is to be regarded as a *permanent and a symbolical pledge*, is of such a nature as to secure that all those who have possessed a personal interest in that mediatorial work shall be brought into a state of glorious redemption in the bright worlds which lie beyond the grave. The atonement which the Saviour offered on the cross, and the intercession which the Saviour is constantly presenting before the throne—these, brethren, are the doctrines to which we advert, and on which we implicitly rely, as containing within them the certainty, that the Saviour will redeem "to the uttermost" all who come to God by him. Every saint who dies in Jesus dies to enter into "the kingdom of the Father:" and all saints, whatever be their differences of colour, or of time, or of nation, or of language, or of rank, at the appointed period, which has been determined in the counsels of eternity, shall be made to stand in one vast contemporaneous throng, without one being wanting, for the purpose of receiving the palms of victory and wearing the crowns of glory which shall never fade away. We bring you to the foundation, and we lay as it were, that foundation bare; and pointing you now to the atonement of the cross, which it is the great object of this discourse to exhibit, connected with the subsequent parting of the Saviour, to plead the merits of that cross before the heavenly Father, we tell you that we believe that, as atonement has been offered for you, it is a matter of firm and unalterable necessity that there shall be a final glorious assemblage of all who have believed in Christ in the kingdom of the Father. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." It is thus, my brethren—we state the fact on the Redeemer's promise—that his followers at last shall be made the inhabitants and the possessors of the Father's kingdom.

The other statement connected with this, and arising from the words of the Redeemer, is, that in the kingdom of the Father *the followers of the Saviour shall possess unspeakable and everlasting joy*: "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Here is the symbol of the pleasures to which we

advert. It must be understood, of course, that in the kingdom of the Father there grow no vines, with their clusters of purple grapes, and that there is no hand to press the juice into the chalice, and which is to be taken by those who have been received into the joys of that eternal paradise. The language must be regarded as one of those beautiful figures by which things spiritual are illustrated by referring to things corporeal and temporary. When the Saviour speaks of drinking wine new with his followers in the Father's kingdom, he means to say, that there they shall possess the actual fruition of all the blessings of which the rite was the symbol and the type: and that the mental pleasures which are enjoyed by his followers here, by receiving the tokens of his dying love, shall be brought out in futurity into such a state of perfection and extacy, that they shall be considered as perfectly new; and that newness at the same time be regarded as denoting their permanence; that the pleasures there perfected and refined, shall be made by them to be their possessors, without a change. They are to possess the fulness of joy, at the right hand of God, and pleasures for evermore.

You will observe, that the pleasures which are to be enjoyed by the followers of the Saviour, in the Father's kingdom, are especially to be regarded *as associated with his presence*. The grand promise which shall include all other promises—the grand enjoyment, which comprehends within it all other enjoyments—is, that there the followers of the Saviour are to enjoy communion with him “until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom;” all the expressions signifying the most intimate, familiar, and affectionate intercourse which mind can hold with mind.

It is most interesting to observe, in the promises of the New Testament, how pre-eminently the presence of Christ, without any additional illustration whatever, is presented as constituting the happiness of the celestial world. Take a few examples which occur. Said the Saviour, in John, xii. 26, “If any man will serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be.” In John, xiv. he says, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Again, in his intercessory prayer: “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” The Apostle of the Gentiles says, “We are confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight): we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” How beautiful is the anticipation which he expresses with regard to himself as constituting the very sum of his eternal felicity: “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.”



My Christian brethren, let us fix our one serious contemplation on this solitary application—that in heaven, the kingdom of the Father, we are to have near, intimate, and affectionate communion with Christ. Because Christ is there, all sin must be destroyed: because Christ is there, all adversaries must be chased away: because Christ is there, all sorrow must be terminated and expelled: because Christ is there, all happiness must be secured, and every treasure and every honour must be bestowed upon the adorned and crowned heads of those whom he has bought with his blood. Blessed Jesus! we want nought besides, except the fulfilment of thy promise, that thou shouldst take the wine of the kingdom, new with us, in the kingdom of the Father. Grant us this, and all then is comprehended and is safe—safe in life, and in death—safe and happy throughout the ages of eternity. Here is the very climax of the Christian hope, and the very well-spring of the Christian joy: and so shall we be for ever with the Lord.

There are two remarks which must terminate this address, and I cannot terminate it without briefly presenting them.

First: *how vast and how wonderful is the love of Christ to men!* Brethren, go through the mystery of godliness, and stop, if you can, in the successive stages of its development, for the purpose of beholding the wonder of love. He who was “in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” But, brethren, go not to-day to the scenes of his exaltation, but go to the scenes of his humiliation and death. Go to Gethsemane, where his very sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Go to the judgment-hall, and see him spit upon, and buffeted, and smitten with the palms of the hand. Go to Calvary, and see him stretched between two thieves, himself in the centre as the very vilest of them all. Hear the cry of his mysterious destitution—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” And listen to him again in pronouncing these last words at once of suffering and of victory—“It is finished!” and see him bow his head, and give up the ghost. My brethren, *here* is the very mount and summit of infinite and eternal love. O, who will not acknowledge it!—and who will not prize it!—and who will not especially pray, that, being strengthened with might in the inner man, he may be rooted and grounded in love, and so be “able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that he may be filled with all the fulness of God!”

And then, finally, observe the *vast importance of being numbered amongst the followers of Christ yourselves.* My brethren, you have often been told that except ye be numbered amongst the followers of Jesus Christ, by faith in his atoning blood, it is impossible for you finally and everlastingly to be saved. The destinies of heaven, then, or of hell, are suspended upon the inquiry whether you are the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. If, my brethren mys-

terious splendour were suddenly to fill the house where we are assembled; and if, as in the time of the apostle Paul, a light far greater than the light of the sun, were to cast its radiance amongst us, and there, in embodied glory, were to be seen for a moment the separated Redeemer; and if he were to ask the solemn inquiry, from each one now in his presence, "Lovest thou me?—lovest thou me?—what would be the reply? There are some who can answer with the apostle at once, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." But how many are there with regard to whom it must be feared the answer would be, "No, we love thee not!" My fellow sinners, I pray you for one moment to pause. Jesus is now speaking by these elements of bread and wine now before you, and of which his people are now about to partake. He speaks by his ministry and his written word; and he tells you that if you depart beyond the scenes of the temporary probation of this world, without having been numbered amongst those who follow him in the spirit of repentance and faith, there is a period when the sentence will be pronounced of separation, never, never to be closed. You shall meet Jesus: but how? Upon his judgment throne—not as the Lamb, but as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah;" and in place of hearing those accents of infinite mercy, "Enter into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," all the sounds of his voice will be still, and in place will reverberate the mighty and the overwhelming thunder—"Depart!"—and it is He who would have been the Saviour who speaks it—"Depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The cup shall be taken—but it is the cup of wrath and of indignation; and the fallen spirit will drink it to the dregs: and it will rankle, and burn, and scorch in his veins, as a living, immortal poison, in order to fulfil the annunciation of "fiery indignation" against them who refuse him, who was able to save to the uttermost.

My dear friends, pardon me—if it require an apology, for earnestness and for prolonged importunity: but what we want is, that none amongst you should be lost in hell, but that all should be exalted to the enjoyment of the Father's kingdom. May the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, who supplies his place in this lower world, now render his mightiest influences, and cause you all to feel the attraction of the cross of Calvary! Amen.

PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE THE CRITERION OF DECISION AT THE  
ETERNAL JUDGMENT.

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REV. J. R. BARBER, A.M.

SAINT PAUL'S CHAPEL, VAUXHALL, DECEMBER 13, 1835\*.

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“ Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”—MATTHEW, xxv. 40.

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THE grand and distinguishing characteristic of Christianity is *love*. This is the criterion which the adorable author of it has given of the reality of the profession of his followers—the genuine principle of it, is an emanation of a glorious attribute of the Deity himself; for GOD IS LOVE: and as he has manifested his love in the works of Creation and Providence, but above all in the Redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, so will the true Christian manifest his love, and shew forth his discipleship, by acts of mercy and compassion, both to the bodies and souls of men. For as a highly favoured apostle, writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says expressly, “ Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” And St. Paul writing to the Church at Thessalonica, says, “ Ye are taught of God to love one another.” And if we examine the conduct of the first disciples, we shall find that their profession of this divine principle did not end in empty words: they did not say “ Be ye warmed and be ye filled,” and notwithstanding give them not of those things which be needful for the body. No! they loved not in word only, but in deed and in truth.

The first propagators of our most holy faith, were poor fishermen. They were despised, persecuted, and imprisoned, as their divine Master had been before them; but they had been taught the truth as it is in Jesus; and so powerful was the demonstration of the Spirit which accompanied the first discourse on record in the Christian church on the day of Pentecost, that three thousand made a public confession of their belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah predicted to their fathers: and influenced by the divine love which was abundantly shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, they gave the strongest proof they could give of the truth of that confession, of the reality of their conviction, by disposing of their goods and possessions, to supply the wants of their poorer brethren. And we shall find by following up the history, that some of them were persons of distinction, the landed proprietors, of the country: “ For as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet, and distribution was made unto every man, according as he had need.”

Now though we are not called upon in the present state of society to act

\* On behalf of the Lambeth Pension Society.

precisely in the same manner (for we find that it continued in the primitive church only when necessity required, during the cruel persecutions which raged so furiously), yet we are called upon to act on the same general principle, by providing for the temporal, yes, and for the spiritual wants of our poorer brethren. "For whose hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

My brethren beloved, we are honoured by the name of Christians: let us ask ourselves individually what it is to be a Christian. Let us ask ourselves the important question, "Am I a Christian?" To be a Christian is to be CHRIST'S. To be a Christian, is to be his purchased property—bought with a price, even his most precious blood; for "he his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness;" wherefore ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. And in words which cannot be misunderstood, we are informed, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." For as under the Mosaic dispensation, he was not a Jew who was one outwardly only, neither was that circumcision which was outward in the flesh only; but he was a Jew who was one inwardly, whose circumcision was that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter only; whose praise is not of men, but of God: so under the Christian dispensation, he is not a Christian who is one outwardly only, neither is that baptism which is outward in the flesh only; but he is a Christian who is one inwardly, and baptism is that of the heart also, in the spirit; as St. Peter so clearly testifies, where having spoken of the universal deluge he says, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." And St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, in which he so clearly unfolds the spirituality of the Mosaic ritual, shows how the heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience, "even by the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, to purge our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God."

To be a Christian then, is to have the Spirit of Christ—to have the mind of Christ. As he was ever active in ministering to the spiritual and temporal wants of mankind, so should we, if we would lay claim to his name, abound in every good work. "For even hereunto were ye called," says the same apostle, "because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously."

The principle, then, from which every action of the Christian should flow, is *love*; the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost; the love of Christ which constraineth the genuine disciple; love to Christ, in whom dwell all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, for his unexampled love to us: for "we love him because he first loved us, and gave himself for us."

Do we then lay claim to the Christian name? Does Christ dwell in us by his Holy Spirit? Let us examine whether we are bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit; whether we are in deed and in truth the followers of those who were first dignified with the name of Christians.

How did this spirit of Christian love operate in them? How did they shew forth the Spirit that was in them? After the miraculous conversion of Saul of Tarsus (who, from the manner in which his name is mentioned in connexion with the martyrdom of St. Stephen, as consenting to his death, appears to have been a person, not only of great zeal for the observance of the Mosaic ritual, but also a person of considerable importance at Jerusalem, invested with magisterial, if not with judicial, authority; and not satisfied with exercising that authority in the metropolis of Judea, but "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against the disciples of the Lord), he set out on a circuit, an exterminating excursion to Damascus: but he was arrested in his mad career by that Lord whom he had so violently persecuted in persecuting his followers. The churches had rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and then, it appears, the necessity of having one common stock having ceased, the plan itself was abandoned, but not the principle upon which it had been established: for we are informed by the sacred historian, in the eleventh chapter of the Acts, of one of those very individuals, who, on the commencement of the persecution at Jerusalem, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet: "Barnabas, a Levite of the country of Cyprus, departed from Jerusalem to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the Church and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch."

And now, the same divine principle of Christian love, springing from that genuine and living faith which had induced Barnabas to dispose of his property on the first persecution at Jerusalem, manifested itself in the Christians of Antioch. For "in those days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch: and there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea, which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul." An example, brethren, worthy of imitation by all who desire to be honoured by the name by which they were first called. Their benevolent conduct sprang from love, that divine principle implanted in them by God himself, and flowing from faith in Him who loved them and gave himself for them; a principle of love to all, but especially to them of the household of faith.

Among those who are, or should be the more immediate objects of that divine principle of love from which all our benevolence should flow, the aged and infirm, the sick and afflicted poor of our own neighbourhood, have a peculiar claim. Their characters and their wants are well known to us: we are, therefore, better able to adapt our relief to their necessities: and we have the pleasure and happiness of beholding the fruit of our labour of love. And what benevolent mind does not rejoice and exult at the opportunity of doing good? How heart-stirring and soul-cheering the reflection of having administered the balm of consolation to distress! What genuine disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ does not rejoice in being permitted to tread in the footsteps of his divine Master?

And though, as regards our merits, after we have done all, we must acknowledge, with deep abasement and humility, that we are unprofitable servants,

yet, whatsoever we do unto a disciple of Christ in the name of a disciple, he considers as done unto himself: if the principle from which our benevolence springs be the right principle, the principle which I have been endeavouring to explain to you, then, and then only, will our benevolence be pleasing in his sight.

As we should not substitute the sign for the thing signified, so we should not confound the effect with the cause. The term "charity" is of very vague signification now, and generally excites but the idea of the act of alms-giving. Not so the charity which St. Paul so beautifully and feelingly describes in 1 Cor. xiii. The term *Ἀγάπη* used by him and rendered "charity" denotes not the act, but the principle from which the action flows—love, even that love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. "For though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not *ἀγάπη*—charity or love, it profiteth me nothing." The venerable Reformers of our truly Apostolic church were clear upon this subject; and hence in the twelfth Article of our Church—(and, my brethren, I delight to appeal to that form of sound words, for I verily believe that if the doctrines contained in those Articles were more constantly proclaimed and better understood, there would be much less separation from our Church, more conformity, more love, more communion of saints)—the twelfth Article of our Church says, "Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith: insomuch, that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree discerned by the fruit." And if we build upon the right foundation (and other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, even Christ Jesus our Lord), if I say, we lay the right foundation, there never can be any danger in raising a superstructure of good works thereon: and hence in the grand, the sublime, the awful scenery, which is presented to our view in the beautiful parable by which the last great day is depicted, and from which our text is taken, though those who are honoured with the regard of the Judge, not only make no account, but are not even conscious of having done any thing for him, so entirely are they absorbed in the contemplation of his glory and their own unworthiness, yet he, in welcoming them to that kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, enumerates a long list of kindnesses shewn to him by them. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Were the Son of man to leave the bright realms of bliss, where, seated at the right hand of his heavenly Father's throne, he is sustaining his great mediatorial character by making intercession for us, were he to appear in all his glory, and

in this state take up his abode with us, all would no doubt be anxious to serve him, all would no doubt testify their zeal for him. But were he to appear in a state of humiliation, were he to stand in need of our services, how should we stand affected towards him? Our profession now is great, but what would be our conduct were he thus to appear? This, my brethren, is a question more easily answered than at first sight might appear. It would be to him precisely what it is to his poor, his afflicted, his distressed disciples. This he himself assures us, for when the Son of man, seated on his throne of glory, surrounded by all his holy angels, and assembled worlds gathered before him, shall present to his redeemed that incorruptible crown which fadeth not away, enumerating the acts of kindness he has experienced from them, in reply to their expressions of unconsciousness of having ministered to him, the King shall answer and say. "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

But, my brethren, he has appeared in deep humility. He did leave his throne of glory; he did become a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; he did appear in a state of the deepest poverty: for the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests; but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head. And how was he then received? How was he then attended? "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew him not. He came to his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." He did condescend to assume our nature, and we esteemed him "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." He did take up his abode with us, and "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself." But the cause?

" Say, ye blest seraphic legions,  
What thus brought your Maker down?  
Say, why did he leave your regions,  
Why forsake his heavenly throne?  
Notes melodious  
Tell the cause, 'Good-will to man.'"

Never again will he appear in humility; never again will he become a servant of servants; never again will his visage be so "marred more than any man and his form more than the sons of men." The grand object of his first advent has been effected. You cannot minister to him personally, but you are not without abundant opportunities of testifying your love to Him, of proving how you would act towards Him were he to visit us in great humility; for the poor shall never cease from thy land: and the poor and the contrite he graciously condescends to consider as his brethren; and whatsoever is done to them as done to himself.

This was the case with Saul of Tarsus in his unconverted state. Jesus had ascended up on high: there Stephen beheld him in glory when Saul was "consenting to his death;" against Jesus he could prevail nothing: his day of suffering was past: but of the church he made "great havock," "entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison." And what was the accusation brought against him when arrested on his way to Damascus on the same errand of death? "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou

me?" And to the interrogatory of Saul, "Who art thou, Lord?" the reply is, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." And this, beloved, is the case with those who act the contrary part. When Christ instructed his disciples in the mysteries of the kingdom, he said unto them, "He that receiveth you receiveth me." And "whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

The Society for which an appeal is made to you this day, has for its object the supply of temporal comfort to the aged and infirm; the distribution of the fruits of Christian love to those who have seen better days; the exhibition of the effects of Christianity in the care which the Church has for all her members. And while I advocate the cause of this excellent, this truly Christian society, may I be permitted to address one word to the directors of it. You, Christian brethren, manifest your concern for the temporal welfare of your aged, of your poorer neighbours: your laudable object is to smooth the rugged path of life's declining days. And ye do well: but while ye provide for the casket, neglect not, I beseech you, the rich jewel therein contained. What an opportunity of pressing the importance of the soul's value! If so much be done for the mortal clay, O, what ought not to be done for the immortal spirit! And when the mortal body is brought low by disease, when old age creeps on with steady and with constant pace, the mind is frequently more disposed to attend to the words of wisdom, than in the morning of life when all is young about us. This is frequently the very means which Jehovah in his infinite wisdom devises for bringing home the lost sheep to the fold. "Before I was afflicted," said one of old, "I went astray; but now have I learned thy ways." This is the period when the poor stand more in need of support, and in no way can religion recommend herself so much as in ministering to the temporal wants. Embrace then the golden opportunity; and while you shew a sincere regard for their welfare here, be as earnest in directing them to the heavenly inheritance, the true riches to be obtained alone through the merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

Much of that honourable, noble spirit of independence, which was once the glory of our land, and the characteristic of Britons, has from a variety of circumstances disappeared from the poorer classes of society. This Institution then comes in to restore, to foster, to invigorate, and cherish, its growth: it holds out a premium to honest industry; it affords a stimulus to exertion. Eight years have elapsed since it was first formed, and during that period nearly one hundred of our poorer brethren have experienced the benefit of its timely aid; and their declining years have been cheered and comforted by the generous sympathy and substantial charity of their more affluent neighbours. This, therefore, to say nothing of the load of human misery alleviated by this Society, will be a sufficient inducement to the Christian to contribute to its funds.

May the God of all grace dispose your hearts, both to receive and to bestow a blessing; and may you finally, by his infinite mercy, inherit that everlasting life which he has so freely given us in his Son, and hear from him the King of glory, at the last great day the joyful welcome, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"



## THE FOUNTAIN OPENED FOR SIN AND UNCLEANNESS.

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REV. J. H. EVANS, A. M.

JOHN STREET CHAPEL, KING'S ROAD, DECEMBER 15, 1835\*.

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"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness."—ZECHARIAH, xiii. 1.

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WHAT is "the day" to which the prophet here alludes? It is clearly the Gospel day, the latter day of the church of God; but not the *last* of the latter days, as is evident from the seventh verse: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." The prophet speaks of the great and glorious day, in which Jehovah was to sheathe the sword of his justice in the blood of his own beloved Son; a day which had its fulfilment in the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ; a day which shall never be seen again; for then did he "finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in our everlasting righteousness, which is unto all, and upon all, them that believe."

The prophet also here alludes to those legal uncleannesses so much and so fully developed in the old covenant; and, through them, directs us to that great disease and leprosy of the soul, sin. He then speaks of a *fountain* for such sin and uncleanness; not, as in the old dispensation, a brazen laver, and a molten sea; but a fountain, ever flowing, and ever full. And this fountain, he describes, moreover, as a fountain *open*; not exclusively confined as the molten sea was to the Jew, the priest, and that, too, the priest of the Levitical priesthood; but now opened to the *whole* "house of David," and to *all* "the inhabitants of Jerusalem," even to the whole elect family of God, from the rising up of the sun to the going down thereof; that they may wash in that fountain, and be cleansed, and purified, and sanctified.

In directing your minds to some of the points alluded to in the text, let us consider, first, the great uncleanness, the great spiritual leprosy, sin. Secondly, I would make a few remarks on the fountain which the Eternal Spirit here speaks of, and to which he directs us. And let us consider, thirdly, what are the great blessings which result to the family of God, in consequence of its being an *open* fountain. May the Lord, the Spirit, give unto us that blessing which maketh rich; that true wisdom which entereth into the truth, and tasteth the sweetness of it, with a personal sanctifying application of it to our own hearts and consciences, for Jesus Christ's sake! For, beloved, precious as is this society, and precious, as ought to be, all societies, which have for their object the glory of God, the exaltation of the name of Jesus, and the good of men's souls, yet is there something infinitely more precious to us than even this

\* On behalf of the London City Mission.

object—that the name of Jesus may be to our own selves as ointment poured forth.

First, the prophet alludes to those uncleannesses set forth in the old dispensation, leading us, through them, to THE GREAT SPIRITUAL LEPROSY—SIN. My dear friends, sin is that which defileth the man. It is not poverty; it is not sickness, nor disease, however terrible and painful they may be. It is not low birth, nor low occupation. It is not mean attainments, nor mean understanding. That which defileth a man is *sin*. *This* is the leprosy of the soul; *this* is the great inward plague; *this* is that disease which pervades the whole man, makes his understanding dark, his conscience defiled, his will stubborn, and his heart alienated from God. *This*, too, is that pestilence of the soul which pervadeth the whole of mankind. Go where we will, still we see this leprosy of sin pervading the whole mass of our fellow-men. How painful is it, as we look on those who are amiable in their manner, polished in their demeanour, mild in their temper, gentle in their carriage, still to be reminded, that even in *them* the “carnal mind is enmity against God.” Yea, it is a solemn thought, that where a man is a stranger to the fear of God, he is not only evil in himself, but is injurious to those around him; whatever may be his station, his rank, his influence, he is an injury to his fellow-men; nay, the higher, and the more extensive his influence, the more exalted his station, the greater is the evil produced. Whether he be a parent or a child, a master or a servant, a brother or a friend, a neighbour or an acquaintance; in all these relative situations he is an injury to others. Do not be deceived by Satan: wherever the fear of God is not, right principle is not to be found; and right practice can only flow from right principle. Where the principle is evil, the practice can never be right; such a man’s religion is always unsound; and even his morality is defective and unequal. Where the fear of God is not, be assured real good can never flow, but positive evil must always spring forth.

But, my brethren, if sin, in its more modified exhibition, be evil, what shall we say, when this inward plague comes out into all its open acts, and unblushing exercise—when it shews itself in all the blackness of its baneful and disgusting exuberance? What a picture then presents itself to our eyes! The whole man exhibiting a whole mass of iniquity, eyes full of adultery, a mouth full of cursing and blasphemy, hands full of theft, and the feet swift to shed blood!

Man, in his natural state, is defiling to his fellow man. But we come to still higher ground than this. It is this inward leprosy which maketh the man an offence to God. Not merely is he offensive by reason of his defiling others, but he is offensive to a holy, pure, just, and righteous God. My brethren, that this offensiveness does not issue in our everlasting destruction, no thanks to ourselves for it: well may we lay our mouths in the dust, whilst we ascribe our deliverance to the sovereignty of divine grace, giving all the glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Man, in his natural state, in his unregeneracy, is not only a homicide, a destroyer of his fellow-men—and not only a suicide, bent upon his own destruction—but he is also, in mind, in principle, a Deicide. A man, in his unregenerate condition, aims at that, in which, could he succeed, he would destroy God himself. In every act of deliberate sin, there is a shaft aimed by the sinner at the very being of the Almighty, at the very perfections of Deity.

This is the great leprosy of the soul. It is this which defileth the man. It is this which maketh him a defilement to his fellow creatures. It is this which renders him offensive to God himself. This evil pervadeth the whole world; and yet men are naturally as insensible as if there were no truth in it. And when we place their real state before them, and tell them awful things; when we preach to them the holiness of the law, and the sanctity and salvation of the Gospel, and then their responsibility; what effect does it produce upon the great mass of our hearers? How comparatively few are made to feel the reality of what we say, on their own consciences! And if this be sad, what think we of the thousands upon thousands who never heard from the lips of man of one of these things; who never heard of the perfect holiness of the law; never had the grace of the Gospel declared unto them; never had yet one moment's conversation with a Christian man or woman; who never had placed before them the awful account which they must render at the last great day, the day of judgment! I do not forget, that, with all the hearing of sermons, there can be no saving change wrought, without the operation of the Eternal Spirit on the heart; but the Spirit of God works by means—and here are no means. The preaching of the Gospel is the great medium of conversion, and they have never heard the Gospel; they have never had one to read to them, to pray with them, to talk with them. If any doubt this, let them visit the alleys and courts of this vast metropolis, within but a little distance from this very chapel, and he will find thousands who scarcely know whether they have souls to be saved or lost; who know no more of Christ and his Gospel, of themselves and God, than the veriest heathen. O, this leprosy!—this uncleanness!—this dreadful evil! It is a fearful thing to see it pervading the world, and the world insensible to its malignity.

But observe, secondly, the prophet speaks of A FOUNTAIN FOR SIN AND UNCLEANNESS. I need scarcely say, that this fountain is the blood of Jesus Christ; I need not take up your time in attempting to prove it. It is the blood of Him who, "by one offering, hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified" (Heb. x. 14): that precious blood which, "through the Eternal Spirit doth purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. ix. 14): that blood which "cleanseth from all sin" (1 John, i. 7). Were it possible for us to ask those pure spirits who are escaped the pollutions of this world, and who are passed beyond its troubles, freed from all its tribulation, where they washed their robes, and made them white, they would tell us that it was in the blood of the Lamb—in that blood which is here set forth by "a fountain open for sin and uncleanness."

There is, my brethren, unutterable sweetness in this truth, when spiritually discerned. It is not as the brazen laver, or as the molten sea: it is a cleansing, purifying, fountain. Whatever might have been the mass of water in that molten sea, yet, if there were many to wash therein, it became defiled and polluted at last; but here, if ten thousand times ten thousand wash therein, it cleanseth the last as the first. In that molten sea there was a power indeed to remove legal defilement; but what power had it to purify the soul? None. But here is a fountain which cleanseth from all sin. Blessed thought to those who feel weary of sin's pollution, grieved at sin's defilement, who see the evil of sin, and hate it, and long for pardon and holiness; who, experiencing the solemn obligations of God's law upon their hearts and consciences, and in the light of

God's love, see what poor, wretched, lost, miserable, and ruined sinners they are; yes, blessed thought to those, there is a fountain for sin and uncleanness; a fountain which perfectly cleanseth from all sin; so that it shall be sought for, and not be found—it shall be looked for, but there shall be none. This, my dear brethren, is the very glory of the Gospel. At this moment what can whisper peace to the disturbed soul? What can bind up the broken heart? What can give us a ray of heavenly light as we pass through the darkness of the desert? What can bring in peace to our consciences? What can raise us above ourselves? What can cleanse our defiled minds? What, but this precious blood of Jesus, the Son of God, which indeed cleanseth from all sin? And be assured, that this is the blood which purifies the affections also. O, yes! nothing like the blood of Jesus can produce sanctity of motive, and holiness of life. No view of sin so touching to the regenerate soul as that which arises from a sense of sin forgiven. No view does he take of his own delinquency, half so humiliating as that which he finds presented to his mind under the touching consciousness of God's forgiving love. The very blood which cleanseth him from a sense of guilt is that which purifieth his affections and desires, which, leading him into peace with his God, causes him to long to be like him, to be holy, even as he is holy.

Though I dare not extend my remarks on this part of my subject, as upon an ordinary occasion I otherwise might, yet I pray that this brief outline may be a deep lesson of holy instruction to you who hear me. Talk not of the cleansing power of Christ's blood, you that know nothing of its sanctifying tendency. The blood sprinkled on the conscience is the blood which purifieth the heart. Is there one place more holy than another? Is there a place where prayer is secreting, penitent, spiritual, and where tears flow for sin, where a stronger motive springs up to go out among those that are ready to perish, and declare Christ crucified unto them? It is the region of the cross of Christ, the hallowed spot where the fountain is opened for sin and uncleanness.

My brethren, there is something delightful in the thought, that this fountain is not stagnant, stationary. It is not as the brazen laver; and the molten sea, a mere mass of water, in a sense, remaining ever the same. This is a bubbling, springing fountain, ever flowing, ever full; and well does it set forth the redundancy of merit there is in the Son of God. Blessed thought! There is an ever-flowing fulness in the atonement of Jesus. Though thousands and millions have washed therein, yet is it ever flowing, ever full.

My dear friends, the Lord knows my heart. I would pray that you may be in that state of mind, that you may look at sin in its principle, and in its essence (if I may so speak), and hate it with an utter hatred: that ye may have such a view of it as may make you fearful to displease your God, in thought, in word, and in deed, and in practice. This would I say, that if I were preaching my last sermon, I could wish it to be one wherein there would be the largest statement of the full, free, unmerited grace of God in Christ Jesus, and the clearest declarations of its sanctifying tendencies upon the heart of a sinner when led to receive it, leading him to a holy consecration of every faculty of his soul, and every member of his body to his God and Father in Christ Jesus. But, though this is the very desire of my heart, and the very object I have in preaching, yet, when I come to weigh the sin of the creature against the merit of Jesus, I can see no sort of parity, no sort of equality. The blood is the blood of Him who is God as well as man—truly God, truly man. O! the in-

finite, the unchangeable, the eternal edundancy of merit which there is in that fountain to wash away every transgression, blot out every iniquity, and present the souls of his people without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, before the throne of God

But I must remark, and briefly too, thirdly, that THIS FOUNTAIN IS SAID TO BE OPEN. It is not, as formerly, exclusively belonging to the Levitical priesthood; it is open to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This was typified of old, by the laver being without cover. Yes, my brethren, this fountain is an open fountain—so open, that all sinners who will may have free access to it. It is for the very vilest: as it freely sprung from the very heart of God in Christ, so does it freely flow to all comers. Hear our Lord's own words: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely."

Such is the freeness of salvation, so open is that fountain to all who feel their need of its cleansing power, that no one who has ever come to it has been sent unblessed away. This is the very blessedness of the Gospel which we preach. This is the very end and object of our lifting up the cross of the Son of God. And this forms, as I think, the substance of the prophet's words, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness."

My brethren, if a man had once been the subject of a most inveterate disease, and had received a wondrous cure; if he had found, instead of weakness, strength; sleep, instead of restlessness; hunger after his necessary food, instead of loathing it; a real enjoyment of life where there had been none; would there be no thankfulness pervade his heart? Would there be no anxiety that others should partake of the same benefit? Again, if with returning health he should be led to see that the disease under which he had been labouring had been in itself a mortal one, and that, however insensible of it at the time, yet, there had been nothing before him but misery, and torture, and death; that he had been but tampering with himself, and that all those things which he had taken for remedies had but aggravated his disorder and his destruction; would it not make him still more anxiously desire to unfold, as far as in him lay, the remedy? And would not this be particularly laid upon his heart, if he saw all around him under the influence of the same disease, yet careless and insensible, and wholly indifferent to their state, putting themselves off with wretched palliatives, which did but increase, instead of remove their disorder? Would not this increase his desire to unfold the remedy? Could he tell them of a physician who never rejected any who came unto him; who never mistook one case, who never despaired of any, who never failed in one single instance, but was successful in all: the kindest, the tenderest, and best of physicians? See then, the case before us. We are living in the midst of a world that is full of this leprosy, this deadly plague, and yet men are insensible of their disease. They go on with their palliatives, with their deceitful remedies, seeking their own cure, while all their attempts only hurry them on to their ruin.

Behold us in the midst of London. I trust we can say the place is dear to our hearts: of this I am sure—we *ought* to say so; for it is the habitation of thousands of the saints of God: and yet how awful is the picture which London presents to us! When I think of its mercies, is there a more favoured spot

under heaven? When I think of its wickedness, is there a spot more vile? The responsibility of Sodom was as nothing compared with the responsibility of London. Where Sodom had one sermon, London has had its thousands. Where Sodom had its one saint, London has had its thousands, and its tens of thousands: and yet, what is the state of London? How can I describe it? Shall I quote the pamphlet of a respected brother and fellow-minister in Jesus\*? Shall I speak of the 500,000 sabbath-breakers, who live in the total neglect of all religion, and who never enter a place of worship? Shall I speak of the 10,000 who wear out their wretched lives in low gambling?—Of the 20,000 who go about our streets begging, not one out of seventy of whom dares to have his case investigated. Shall I speak of the 30,000 who are living by theft and fraud, rising in the morning, not knowing where to get a single meal through the day? To say nothing of that system of robbery exercised by those who pay no man, and think it lawful? Shall I speak of the 23,000 who are annually picked up drunk in our streets, and among these a number of women? Shall I speak of the 100,000 gin-drinkers—not those who are occasionally so, for there is treble the number of this class, but those who are habitually so, constantly so, day by day, week by week, month by month, and year by year, till they die? Shall I speak of the 100,000 females who walk our streets in systematic and abandoned profligacy? Shall I say how the Sabbath is profaned? It was but last Lord's day that one who was with me counted no fewer than forty-eight shops which were open in one street between this chapel and Hampstead. What shall we say of our Sunday newspapers, assailing us wherever we go.

My brethren, of all this multitude, what is the proportion of those who have never been expostulated with, never reasoned with, never entreated; who have never conversed with one child of God, never heard one Gospel sermon? No one, I am aware, can answer the question; but this I fully believe, that were that proportion really known, it would cause our very hearts to ache. I doubt not the far greater proportion never had one person to speak to them, one person to lay before them fairly, broadly, and tenderly, their ruin, and, dying in their present state, their hopeless destruction. What shall we say of our Sunday travelling? What shall we say of the dinner parties of the great? Are they to be passed over because our attention is directed to the haunts of the poorer orders? No, for in proportion as a man's influence is great, so is he more reprehensible in God's sight, if he exercises that influence in opposition to his will. What then is to be done? Numbers will say, Erect more churches and chapels. Good advice, if the Gospel be preached in them. But to the statement to which I have before referred, namely, that there are 500,000 who do not enter into church or chapel, it may be added how many enter both churches and chapels where the Gospel is not preached; where every thing but the Gospel is preached: and how many are converted under a no-gospel ministry I leave you to judge. If there be any it is the exception, and not the rule; and an exception so rare, that we may call it a miracle in the divine economy, an infraction of the rule of God's administration of grace. But suppose there are more churches and chapels where the Gospel is faithfully preached, it ever remains a truth, that it is always the best part of the population who come to public worship. The worst part go nowhere. There is one of these agents (whose name I must not mention) who tells me there is not one-third of the poor in this neighbourhood who ever enter any place of worship

\* HON. and REV. B. W. NOEL, A.M.

If this be so, we may erect churches and chapels; but then one asks, Will they come? I say they will not. The worst part will still be as they are, and stay away. What, then, is to be done? Some will say, Let the saints of God unite together, and according to the power and time they may have, give themselves up to the work of visiting, especially on the Lord's day. This has been done; and blessed be God, in many instances, well done; and the blessing of God is upon them. But yet the great evil is untouched. My dear brother hints, if every saint of God would undertake the supervisorship of only twelve families in his neighbourhood, and visit them once in the course of every month, much good might be done. I love the idea. I would still say, may God bless all such labours of love. I praise him that there are such societies, and that they are in active operation. I bless him for the District Visiting Society; I bless him for our Christian Instruction Society, for the Metropolitan City Mission long since established. They are dear to me, especially so; and my earnest prayer is, that God would bless them more abundantly, and make them increasing blessings in the midst of this dark and benighted population. But still I maintain, that not all these things do, or can, come up to the pressure of the evil; that they do, and can do, nothing like enough, even taken conjointly, to meet the exigences of the case. We want those who will give up their whole time, who will give up their whole energies, who will give up their secular occupations, who will give up all that God hath given them in nature and grace, with the exception only of what they owe to their families, who will give up *themselves* to this work. We want those who will visit year by year, month by month, week by week, day by day, street by street, house by house, room by room. We want a system, so regular in its operation, that it shall be, in one sense, as mechanism, but, in another sense, under the high motive of the love of Jesus, constraining them by the power of the Holy Ghost dwelling in them, that it shall be the most free and willing service. It does seem to me, that the exigences of this case are met by this Society, and that it is really met by no other Society. Perhaps I had better read its objects, because there may be one here who may not be aware of them.

"Article 1, That the society shall be designated, 'The London City Mission.' 2, The object of this Society shall be to extend the knowledge of the Gospel, irrespective of peculiar tenets, in regard to church government, among the inhabitants of London and its vicinity (especially the poor), by domiciliary visits, for religious conversation and reading the Scriptures; by meetings for prayer and Christian instruction; by promoting the circulation of the Scriptures and religious tracts; by stimulating to a regular attendance on the preaching of the Gospel; by increasing scriptural education; by the formation of loan libraries, and by the adoption of such other means as the managers may judge important, in order to attain the designs of the Society. 3, For carrying these objects into effect, the Society shall employ and pay agents of suitable character and qualifications, who shall give themselves wholly to the work of the Society: they shall also avail themselves of the gratuitous services, as visitors, of private Christians, who may be competent. No person shall be recognised as a manager, agent, or visitor of this Society who is not of evangelical principles, and who does not afford evidence of personal piety. 4, To facilitate the proceedings of the Society, the city, and its environs shall be divided into districts, each of which shall be under the care of a superintendant, who shall meet the agent and the visitors of the district,

285 occasion may require. 5, The general business of the Society shall be conducted by a board of managers, consisting of a treasurer, one or more secretaries, twelve superintendants of districts, and other individuals whose assistance they may deem valuable for the interests of the Society. 6, The general subscriptions and donations received for the Society, shall be expended on the paid agents, and on incidental charges. Contributions will be received, and exclusively applied to any object mentioned in the second article, which the donor may specify. 7, The managers shall report their proceedings annually to the contributors."

Here, then, as far as human eyes can see, seems the remedy we want. May that God, who alone can make it effectual, by his own power working in it, give it his own blessing! I confess to you, that when it was first placed before me I entertained many and serious doubts respecting it. *I did not like the idea of a paid agency.* But when I came to look into this objection, and weighed it in the balance of the sanctuary, I found it wanting. I began to see that God, in his word, lays down his will, broadly and expressly that he who preaches the Gospel shall live of the Gospel; and that he thus consecrates the principle, that all who lay themselves out for him by his service, and give up their time, thought, body, and soul to him, shall receive of the things which perish in that proportion which a covenant Father seeth good to bestow on them. Moreover, I saw that foreign missionaries are supported, colonial justices are supported, home missionaries are supported, and then, why not these home missionaries? for what are our agents but home missionaries? Thus, I began to see that my objection involved an overstraining, an ultra principle, which could not be maintained. The remuneration, too, namely, an income of 40*l.* to 80*l.* per annum, did not seem sufficiently large to hold out any strong enticement to evil. It was little more than supplying the agent with the bare bread that perisheth.

The next doubt I had concerning it was, *as to the difficulty of finding the agents.* Will there be, I asked, a sufficient number of agents? What will be their quality? and who is to have the appointment and control of them? This difficulty was removed by observing the number of those who had already applied for the agency; by the extreme care manifested in the rules of the Society in their choice\*, and actually exhibited in the rejection of forty-four applications out of fifty-seven. Neither could I fail of seeing, in the case of any church or congregation supporting any agent or agents, that in the choice of such an agent, the opinion of the minister of such church and congregation would naturally be looked up to in leading the committee to form a right selection. For instance: if an agent be supported by ourselves, which I humbly trust will soon be the case, to whom would the managers and conductors of this Society look for the approval of such an individual, but to him who ought to know the most of him, and to those in the congregation immediately connected with him, and who must be the best acquainted with his spiritual and moral character? He would not then come as a stranger, but as one known and approved.

Another difficulty arose in my mind, from *the fear I had, lest this Society, should come into collision with other societies*—the District Visiting Society, the Metropolitan City Mission, and the Christian Instruction Society. My dear friends, how careful Satan is on all occasions to place imaginary difficulties

\* See Rules.



fore us, while he keeps the real difficulty out of our sight. That the operation of this Society might, in some measure, alter the sphere of the operation of other societies, there can be but little doubt; but can they not work *together*? Is there not, alas! abundant room for *all*? May we not suppose, that with the same objects in view, there would be that feeling of tenderness, that love and consideration for each other, as not to enter upon another's field and work, in the midst of another's labours? Let other societies work where they now work, and let the London City Mission work round them. And, in many instances, may not other societies, by narrowing their field, work it more thoroughly, more extensively, more efficiently? If any society can visit regularly, systematically, street by street, house by house, room by room, the London City Mission will bid it God speed; their labours are not wanted; they will go elsewhere. But if it cannot—then let such society bless God for the London City Mission. My own opinion is, if visiting were more thoroughly performed, more good under the divine blessing would be done. Those fields which have hitherto produced but a scanty crop, might, through grace, be found to contain precious mines of costly gold. I confess, the more I look into the objects and operations of this Society, the more do I feel my heart drawn out in deep concern for its real spiritual good.

See, in this report, how much one agent has visited in the course of two months. In the first month he made four hundred and sixty-two visits, in another month he spent ninety-seven hours in making three hundred and ninety visits. Another agent writes, that in ten weeks he made nine hundred and thirty-four visits. Now, I would say, is it possible that any individuals, engaged from morning to night in trade, in profession, or otherwise, whatever desires God may have given them to lay themselves out for himself and his service, in visiting their fellow-sinners, is it possible, I repeat, that they could thus visit? My dear friends, my firm conviction is, *they cannot*. But I will not detain you longer: I would only say, if you have the blood of sprinkling of which I have been now speaking, upon your hearts and consciences, you will want no motive, no argument from me to stir you up and lead you forward to promote, as far as in you lies, the objects of this society. God distributeth to every man as he will. Some of you have money, and no time; some of you have time, and no money. O forget not neither your time nor your money are your own. Has God blessed you with the means? Consider the necessities of London—the London in which you dwell. Consider your responsibility consider that “to whom much is given, of the same shall much be required, that, surrounded as you are by countless blessings, and mercies innumerable, your responsibilities are of a deeper and more awful cast, than that of any people under the sun. O look on the years, in which God has favoured you with a preached Gospel; and, if in the riches of his sovereign grace he has made you taste its sweetness in your own hearts, O, how much more loudly does he speak to you that you are not your own, but bought with a price, and therefore called upon to glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are his. If, at the last day any should have to say—and I would humbly hope that many, through his rich grace, will have to say—“Bless the Lord for that society, for by it he brought my soul to himself;” should not we too have to bless God, that he ever laid such a society upon the hearts of others—that he ever laid it upon our own? I leave the matter now, between God and your own consciences!

FUTURE PUNISHMENT REGULATED BY PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES OF  
IMPROVEMENT.

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REV. J. PARSONS,

SURREY CHAPEL, JANUARY 24, 1836.

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“ And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required : and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”—LUKE, xii. 47, 48.

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THESE words, my hearers, were uttered by Him who spake as never man spake : they came from the lips of Him who, although he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man ; who, while dwelling among the race whose nature he had assumed, became their instructor in all spiritual truth, expounding to them the extent of their obligation, and the grandeur of their destinies ; and who, after having offered in their behalf an all-sufficient sacrifice, for ever ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high, that, amidst the splendours of the mediatorial government, he might conduct the plans of divine love to a glorious and triumphant accomplishment. That all the announcements of such a Being merit reverential and devout attention, surely will not be disputed. An announcement is now before you, the claim of which is obvious and pre-eminent—a claim which rests not merely on the dignity of the speaker, but on the fact that what is spoken is identified with the highest interests of the human soul.

As to the precise connexion in which the words of the text occur, you will observe they are a part of one of those fictions or parables in which the Lord Jesus, under allusion to domestic customs, several times states important truths, as to the spiritual obligations and responsibilities of mankind. In the present instance, the parable is one of a master, or lord, absent for a season from his dwelling, who has committed to his various servants certain duties to be performed on his behalf ; and who, at an appointed period, mysterious and unknown to them, will return for the purpose of distributing retribution, reward or punishment, according to the actions by which they have been distinguished. The words which we have now read constitute the close of the parable, and they are indeed solemn and impressive : “ That servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required : and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”

It is my intention, my brethren—and I would state it at the outset—gradually, in the process of the observations now to be made, to shew you certain momentous conclusions with regard to your own final responsibilities, and your everlasting welfare : and I must crave your attention to-night, with the utmost simplicity on your part, as with the utmost prayerfulness and earnestness on my own, whilst I endeavour, with all brevity, and yet with all distinctness, to illustrate the three following observations, which may be deduced from the Redeemer's language. First, that all men exist in a state of obligation to God. Secondly, that the responsibilities of men, connected with their state of retribution, vary in proportion to their opportunities of knowledge and improvement. Thirdly, that the punishment of men for the violation of their responsibilities, is regulated by the value of the opportunities which they have possessed, and which they have abused.

First, it is observed, THAT ALL MEN EXIST IN A STATE OF OBLIGATION TO GOD. This general fact it is clearly the object of the parable before us to illustrate—men being presented in the character of servants, and God being presented in the character of a master, or lord. The spiritual application of the relative terms before us, as we have ventured to state it, will be found confirmed by the whole tenor of inspiration. Let us briefly notice the reasons on which the relationship of man to God is founded. It will be understood that this position originates from the fact, that they are indebted to God for their creation ; and that they are indebted to him also for all the means by which their being, once given, is continued, is supplied, and is blessed. “ The Lord is the great God ; he is the great King.” “ The strength of the hills is his also.” “ The sea is his, and the dry land.” “ The Lord he is God : it is he who hath made us, and not we ourselves : we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.”

Moreover, men, invested as they are by the law of their existence, with intelligence, with rational and thinking souls, are brought within the range of the grand scheme of moral government of which God is the supreme and sovereign head, which is based on the eternal and unchangeable perfections of his own nature, and which he wills to conduct through successive ages to his own praise and glory. All who constitute the human race, as well as all angelic beings, are unavoidably the subjects of his government ; they are all comprehended in its purposes ; they are all subservient to its laws ; they are all amenable to its sanctions : and so they must continue as long as men are men and as long as God is God.

There is no occasion for us now to enter into further illustration as to the reason of man's state, as suggested to us in the text : what we have remarked is now sufficient ; and all that remains is to admit and to apply the truth for ourselves.

Now we have on this part of the subject to notice, *the general nature of the obligation which this relationship imposes.* In the phraseology of the text that obligation is, that the servant should do according to his lord's will. Now to this state of obligation, more expressly and in ordinary terms, you remark, it is demanded of men that they render to their God the habitual and the earnest homage of their intellect, and the supreme affections of the heart : that they obey with uniformity all the precepts which, as a Lawgiver, he has been pleased to promulge : and that they render all the faculties and opportunities with which they are endowed, for the advancement of his praise and honour. If, my brethren, we looked merely at the essential principles of moral govern-

ment, we should find the requirement now alleged to be but reasonable and just : and when we advert more distinctly to that record of revelation in which the great and the eternal Giver has been pleased to issue forth and propound his commands, we should find that requirement to be urged on us with irresistible power. Men are, for example, told to "love the Lord their God with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their mind, and with all their strength." They are told that they are to fear him, that they are to serve him, that they are to honour him, and that they are to cleave unto him. They are told that they are to give themselves to him, and that they are to glorify themselves in their bodies and in their souls, which are his. Such are some of the expressions contained in Holy Writ—expressions which the whole of the Sacred Volume is made to illustrate in those various means which are adapted to impress, to convince, and to overawe. And if, my hearers, they were now rightly estimated, how far different would be the spectacle of the moral universe from that which it now presents. Then ignorance, and darkness, and danger would be purged away from its sphere. Then would it present one scene of order, of holiness, of harmony, of beauty, and of joy : and then would it exhibit but one universal paradise, brightened by the unclouded favour of its Lord, and unfolding, through every region and every being, the very element of immortality and of heaven.

Let us then, my brethren, thus be considered as having established this most comprehensive, general principle, that all men are existing in a state of obligation to God. We now proceed to observe,

Secondly, THAT THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEN, CONNECTED WITH THEIR STATE OF OBLIGATION, VARY IN PROPORTION TO THEIR OPPORTUNITIES OF KNOWLEDGE AND OF IMPROVEMENT. It is very clear, as you will observe, from the terms and structure of the text, that a difference is made between the case of that servant who knew his lord's will, and that servant who knew it not : and, arising from the fact before us, there are three remarks here, ascending step by step, to which your attention must be directed.

First, we may assert, that *there exists in the world very different degrees of opportunity for knowledge and improvement.* This fact is beautifully exemplified by the Lord Jesus himself in the memorable parable of the Talents. We are informed in the chapter in which that parable is contained, the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, that "the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one ; to every man according to his several ability ; and straightway took his journey." We cannot, my hearers, exercise our own powers of memory or of observation, without perceiving that there is on earth a very varied distribution of means for estimating and fulfilling the purposes of the grand scheme of moral government, under which, nevertheless, all men are placed. There is, for example, a difference occasioned by the vigour or feebleness of the intellectual faculties which are awarded to individual men : there is a difference occasioned by the refinement or rudeness, the civilization or barbarism, of social habits and national institutions : there is a difference occasioned by the presence or absence of that revelation in which God has been pleased to embody the system of saving truth : there is a difference occasioned by the comparative clearness or obscurity of

that economy under which revelation exists, and from the manner in which it is impressed and brought home to the conscience, the understanding, and the heart. It is not needful that we refer to specific examples for the purpose of illustrating the fact, which is now brought before you. Look around, and you will perceive that the world has long presented, and does now present, many varieties and inequalities arising from the causes we have enumerated. It is thus that God, the supreme Governor and Judge, has been pleased to award to one man five talents, to another man two talents, and to another one talent: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

The second remark, necessarily and directly following from the former, is, *that we are placed in circumstances which afford to us the highest degrees of opportunity for knowledge and for improvement.* At the time when the Saviour spake the solemn words before us, the Jews were invested with the highest degree of privilege among the nations of the earth; and their case was the one which he had pre-eminently and solemnly in view. There cannot be, my brethren, any impropriety—far otherwise indeed—in applying the language of the Saviour to the condition and the circumstances of the country in which it is our own privilege to live. In justifying the estimate we have formed, we do not now refer to intellectual faculties; we do not refer to social customs and habits; we do not refer to the advantages arising from the form of liberal government, and from the various means of improvement, intellectual and moral, which have been so thickly strewed around us, so much as we do to what we term *religious* privileges. With respect to these the heathen nations of the earth are to be regarded as constituting the lowest class and order. They do, indeed, possess the manifestation of God in the works of nature; for "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." "The invisible things of God, from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." They do, indeed, possess the manifestation of God in the law which is written in their hearts, "their consciences also bearing them witness, and their thoughts, the meantime, either excusing or accusing one another." But how feeble is the law, and how tremulous is the voice of reason and of conscience, constituted as man now is, except he be influenced by the power of that revelation in which God has embodied the principles of eternal rectitude, and which is intended to make men wise unto salvation. Now, my brethren, that revelation, you are aware, has been imparted to us; and it has been imparted to us, not in any imperfect form, and shadowy mode, as in patriarchal and Levitical times, but under the very best form in which God has been pleased to grant it to the children of men—even the glorious Gospel of his Son. "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son." We have not the word which was spoken to angels, and which was steadfast, but we have the "great salvation which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his own will." Take, my brethren, a survey of the privileges connected with the system of revelation by which you are now surrounded. Think of your Bibles—books which contain not merely portions and frag-

ments of truth, but which comprehend the whole counsel of God ; with regard to which, on pain of eternal wrath, he has forbidden that any thing should be added or taken away. Think of your Sabbath days, on which you may frequently and periodically retire from the ordinary engagements of the world, and engage in the most delightful retrospect of events that are past, and the most delightful anticipation of events to transpire in ages yet to come. Think of your ordinances, which, under various forms of meditation, and praise, and prayer, are intended to refine and draw out the soul into the closest and most intimate communion with God. Think, again, of your ministers—men who are appointed and set forth by the Spirit of Jehovah for the purpose of proclaiming, with that energy which the living voice can alone command, the oracles of eternal truth, beseeching you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God—warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus the Lord. Truly, my brethren, you will at once be brought to the confession, that the lines have fallen unto you in pleasant places, and that you have a goodly heritage. He hath not dealt with any nation as he has dealt with you. It is now the very noontide, the very meridian, the very zenith of privilege, to which no augmentation or addition can be made, but which must remain in unparalleled and unsurpassing splendour, the very brightest of the bestowments of heaven.

Another remark must also here follow before this part of the subject can be left, namely, *that possessing as we do, such opportunities as those which have been stated, we are under a special call to eminent devotedness to the service of that God who gave them.* It is clearly a doctrine arising from the text, that men are called upon to make an improvement of their privileges precisely adapted and proportioned to their number and their value. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." If two talents have been accorded to a man, he must aspire to gain other two; if five talents have been accorded, the man must aspire to gain other five. Now, my brethren, let it be admitted, that we are, in our own country, gifted with privileges which are so precious; let it be admitted that God has been pleased to surround us with those modes of demonstration around which so much of brilliancy and so much of glory have gathered; and then it also must be admitted, and ought to be deeply felt, that in place of that vain and empty boast in which many have been so apt to indulge, we should regard ourselves as placed under a solemn and special obligation to cultivate the very highest elevation of moral and spiritual character which the whole range of the divine government among men can afford.

We ought to cherish and exhibit that elevation in the affairs of *our own salvation.* Our repentance ought to be the most contrite; our faith ought to be the most firm; our love ought to be the most ardent; our zeal ought to be the most burning; our holiness ought to be the most pure; our devotedness and dedication ought to be the most entire. We should aim to be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are in Jesus Christ, to the praise and the glory of God. We should strive to cleanse ourselves from all the corruptions of the flesh and of the spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

We ought also to exhibit that elevation in promoting the salvation of *other men.* It is a solemn duty imposed on those to whom the privileges of religion have been given, that they should attempt the communication of it to those

now perishing for lack of knowledge. And we must consider ourselves especially here the instruments of the most high God, of moving the sensibilities of our fellow men, who are now existing in a state of rebellion and ignorance, to reclaim them again to their forgotten allegiance to their God, to circulate and extend the principles of spiritual truth far and wide, and to restore the violated honour of Jehovah in every nation that dwells upon the circuit of the globe. Brethren, we ought to regard ourselves as set apart in the providence of God to take the lead among the nations of the earth, in attempting to conduct to these bright and glorious results; and if we do not for this object employ our wealth, our talents, our opportunities, and our prayers, we are verily guilty of the sin in question, one for which it well deserves that the high distinctions which have crowned our land should be overshadowed and obliterated, that the candlestick should be darkened and removed out of its place, and that we should sink down to the most vulgar prostration of the most savage insignificance which we despise. There is a voice which sounds to me—I hear it; there is a voice which sounds to me—you hear it; and to every man, and to every woman, now in the presence of God that voice must thrill with mighty and resistless power, “Occupy—occupy—occupy, until I come.” God grant, my brethren, to you and to me, that the principle may never be forgotten, that “to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”

We have now reminded you of the second proposition arising from the text, that the responsibility of man connected with this state of obligation, vary in proportion to the opportunities of knowledge and of improvement.

We proceed now to the third department, which is, THAT THE PUNISHMENT OF MEN FOR THE VIOLATION OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES, IS REGULATED ACCORDING TO THE VALUE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES WHICH THEY HAVE POSSESSED, AND HAVE ABUSED: “And that servant which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.” There are two remarks under this part of the subject to which your attention will be called.

You will observe, first, that *punishment is to be inflicted upon all by whom their original obligations have been forgotten and violated.* The desert of punishment is presented under the phrase of “committing things worthy of stripes.” A certain period is stated to be appointed by the master, or lord of the household, for the purpose of returning, in order to inflict punishment, or grant rewards, according to the characters of those by whom he has been professedly served. “If the servant say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.” The stripes are the punishment which the master in equity inflicts. It is a solemn fact, that there is not one amongst the children of men, living and dying in a state of primeval depravity and practical departure from God, who shall not suffer the final punishment which God, in righteous judgment, has ordained as the

consequence of guilt. It must be recollected what was the principle of the Mosaic law, to which probably the phrase might have some reference here. "If a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity." The Saviour, for the purpose of shewing that none among the ungodly children of men shall be exempt from the consequences of rebellion, in the parable of the Talents, to which I have already referred, does not take as the example of the punishment, the person to whom the five talents have been committed, nor the person to whom the two had been committed: but the person who had received only one. The nature and the reason of the argument every one must at once perceive. Hear the statement which is made with regard to him: "Then he which had received the one talent came, and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:" asserting his own imperfect and improper views of the character of his master: "And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him" (taking him precisely on his own ground), "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed; thou oughtest, therefore, to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take, therefore, the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents: for unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The Apostle of the Gentiles also follows the example of his Master, in announcing the liability to punishment of those who constitute the lowest class in the degrees of religious privilege—I mean the heathen; he says, "God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good: to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law; (for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing, one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel."

My brethren, hear, then, the statements distinctly and solemnly given. Every man, however scanty, in comparison with others, may have been the amount of his opportunities for knowledge and improvement, nevertheless, justly, deserves final punishment. Hear Him who has said, he will by no means clear the guilty. Say not that ignorance is misfortune, it is *guilt*: and it will be found in the final award of retribution, on those to whom we have now *retained* that God is not to be subjected to any of the implications, and the



rebellious conclusions of mankind; but that still justice and judgment will be found the habitation of his throne.

But, what we principally intend to insist on, on this part of the subject, is, *that the punishment to be inflicted on those whose opportunities have been many, will be far more grievous than the punishment to be inflicted on those whose opportunities have been few.* "Many stripes," or larger and heavier inflictions, are to be the portion of him who knew his lord's will and did it not; but "few stripes," or minor inflictions, are to be the portion of him who knew not his lord's will, and did it not. In this infliction of stripes there seems an allusion to the law, which you observe to be contained in Deuteronomy, xxv. 1—3: "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked. And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee." The deduction of the Saviour, in connexion with this law, appears to be this: that those whose opportunities have been few shall receive a certain amount of punishment, limited in some mode analogous to that which is contained in the announcement of the law; but that those whose opportunities have been many, and who yet have abused and slighted them, are to be subjected to a punishment to which no limit and no measure are to be assigned: they are to endure the keenest inflictions which the wrath of an Almighty and Infinite Being can pour upon them.

It will be observed that this doctrine of proportioning punishment is stated by the Saviour upon another occasion, in connexion with the habits of the Jews, in order to arouse them from that state of impenitence to which they were rapidly and awfully falling. Look at Matthew, xi. 21—24, and listen to the statement. He began to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." Now, my brethren, there is further an application of the same doctrine to those who have lived under the Gospel, as compared with those who have lived and who have perished under the law: and as my desire is to close you in by an authority, against which it is impiety for you to rebel, let me shew the argument from the less to the greater, as specifically presented by the Apostle to the Gentiles in the epistle to the Hebrews. Now mark these three passages; and, my brethren, if I preached no other words than those which are now about to be uttered, I should have preached a discourse which of itself would have a right and a paramount claim to all the attention and trembling homage of your spirits. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recom-

pense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Take again the passage which occurs in chapter x. 26—31: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much more sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he" (the Son of God) "was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The last passage is the one which occurs in chapter xii. 25, 26: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven."

Now, my brethren, I challenge you, admitting that this book is true, whether the doctrine of the proportion of punishment according to the value of the opportunities possessed and abused, is not distinctly and most triumphantly proved? I beg, earnestly and solemnly beg, that those whose consciences among you are stirred within you to-night, as testifying that you have not been led to improve the opportunities, for the welfare of your own spirits, and the glory of God—I say I do beg, earnestly, solemnly, and affectionately beg, that you will take to your own bosoms the judgment of the apostolic words. Brethren, you congratulate yourselves that your lot is cast in a Christian land: you congratulate yourselves that your Bibles are circulated without restriction from North to South, and from East to West: you are congratulating yourselves that you sit beneath your own vine and fig-tree, and that no one dareth to make you afraid: you congratulate yourselves that you are far distant removed from every nation and clime of the earth, in the amount and value of the privileges with which you have been invested. It is granted, we have been attempting to prove it; and now what is the result? Why, that if you depart into a state of future retribution, and meet your coming Lord without the dedication, adequately and rightly, of all that you have and have been to his praise and glory, your's will be the "sorer punishment," which is to overtake the impenitent. It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for *you*. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for *you*. It will be more tolerable for the combined and multiplied crimes that have degraded and polluted the abandoned regions of heathenism than for *you*. For *you* the judgment throne will be invested with a more portentous gloom: for *you* the thunder will reverberate in a mightier peal; for *you* the sentence will be pronounced in a harsher and a more awful tone: for *you* the worm that dieth not will infix a keener pang: for *you* the fire that never can be quenched will scorch with a hotter flame. Down, down to the lowest abyss in the pit of eternal perdition, will that man be hurled who has heard, and heard often, of salvation, but rejected it and scorned it. My fellow-sinners, should it be your lot to go down there, amid those who welter in the lake of torment that burneth for ever and for ever, as you pass, your own voice will utter a deep and muffled tone, acknowledging the justice of the God who

has condemned you, and exclaiming with the angel of the waters, "Thou art righteous, O Almighty, because thou hast judged thus:" "The servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

My brethren, it is with great anxiety of mind that I present this subject before you to-night: but addressing a vast, and doubtless promiscuous congregation, it appeared to me of immense importance that a simple and continuous statement of the great doctrines connected with our original obligations and responsibilities, would be a matter of no common moment in the discharge of duty and to the interests of souls. You have been reminded that all men are in a state of obligation to God; indebted to him for their being and its preservation, and placed by him purposely under a grand system of moral government, of which he is the head. And the general nature of the obligation which this relationship imposes, is the entire devotedness of heart, intellect, and life to his praise and glory. You have been reminded, that the responsibilities of men, connected with their state of obligation, vary in proportion to the opportunities they have possessed for knowledge and improvement. There do exist different opportunities for knowledge and improvement: we are placed in circumstances which have conferred on us in the highest degree, opportunities for knowledge and improvement; and we are therefore placed in special obligation to devote ourselves to God who gave them. The punishment of men for the violation of their responsibilities is to be regulated by the value of the opportunities which they have possessed and have abused: all men who violate their original obligations shall be punished; but the punishment to be inflicted on those whose opportunities have been many will be much more grievous and severe than the punishment to be inflicted on those whose opportunities have been few.

My Christian brethren, there is a powerful application which this subject must make to us. If I might be allowed for one moment to refer to individual circumstances, as giving me more than common, perhaps, too much earnestness, on the present occasion; I would simply state the coincidence, that this is a day of the month which I have usually set apart, or endeavoured to do so, for many years, in some measure for commemorating the event of a mother's death. In pondering, my brethren, upon the high and awful matters which the recollection of that event calls up into my spirit, I cannot of course but recollect the amount of my own personal responsibility, as having been placed, through the instrumentality of that mother's death, in the ministry of the Gospel, and having received the charge of that Gospel in declaration to human souls. My brethren, it is with emotions that you can never enter into, that I have come up hither to-night, anxious to discharge a present responsibility, and to feel in my own intellect and heart more of the might of the obligation under which I am called to faithfulness, to holiness, and to active devotedness of life. My first concern, in attempting to impress these feelings upon others, must be those who are *fellow-heirs and partakers of the grace of life*. I do charge you, my Christian brethren and sisters, that you will endeavour to address yourselves to those various means by which your own spirits may be roused and your own obligations may be performed. Especially I call upon *the young*

whom the cause of Christ must shortly be committed, when the heads of others are laid low in the dust of death. My young friends, resolve that you will not be merely Christians, like your fathers, but far more devout, zealous, and earnest than they: and as you have had placed before you the amount of your duty to Him who hath done such things for you, let it be made a time of repeated and reiterated vows, when you will address yourselves to your God, and say, "Here Lord I give myself away, 'tis all that I can do." And God grant to you, you who have professed the Gospel, whether aged or young, that you may lie down at last in peace as good and faithful servants, and be known in other worlds as having been wise, and therefore shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as having turned many to righteousness, and therefore shine as the stars for ever and for ever.

But you, my hearers, *whose minds have been far from God*, and who have thought nothing of fulfilling your obligations to him, and of meeting your responsibilities to him, can you bear the thought of dying with all your privileges unimproved and abused? Can you bear the thought of entering the portals of eternity by the gate of the guilty and the condemned? Can you bear the thought of standing before the judgment-seat, and be by an invisible power, forced away to the left hand of Him who sits there, having to glare upon you the eye of just and avenging Omniscience, and having to peal upon your spirit, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Can you bear it? Who can dwell with the devouring fire? Who can dwell with the everlasting burnings? Can you bear it?

My brethren, it is impossible for the preacher beyond that question to invent another appeal. I can only conjure you, in the name of the Master who is shortly coming, and who will judge you and me, that, while you shudder at the thought of being banished with everlasting destruction from his presence, and the glory of his power, you will even now resolve and return—seek for the influence of grace, and seek to be brought in the path-way that leads to glory. Say not that you will do it to-morrow. Tell me not, like Felix, "Go thy way for this time, and at a more convenient season I will send for thee." No, my brethren, I was going to say, I will not go; I will stand and speak, and conjure, and entreat, and warn, until every spirit in this assembly shall be given to its God. But alas! it cannot be. Yet remember, as you retire, and let the voice that speaks to you, yet speak in the echo, that *now* is the accepted time, and that *this* is the day of salvation. "Serious things to-morrow." So said the ancient captain in his beleaguered city: and when the morrow came, he was defeated—he was a captive, and a corpse. "Serious things to-morrow." So said many a spirit, whom the morrow's sun saw in the world of retribution. "Serious things to-morrow?" My brethren, serious things *now*; serious things *now*: and *now*, by all that is glorious in heaven—by all that is dreadful in hell—by all that is tender in the Redeemer's blood, and all that is precious in the well-being of the immortal spirit—*now* turn, repent, believe, be justified, and be saved. Then, my brethren, when the trump of the archangel shall sound, and when the dead shall be raised to stand before God, a hand will issue from the clouds that environ the judgment-seat, beckoning you onward and upward; and a voice, in tones of melody never yet heard by mortal man, shall echo the tidings of your acceptance, "Well done! well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" Amen.

## PRESENT IGNORANCE AND FUTURE ILLUMINATION

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REV. J. PARSONS,  
SURREY CHAPEL, JANUARY 31, 1836.

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"Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." JOHN, xiii. 7.

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THE immediate occasion, my brethren, on which the Lord Jesus thus addressed one of his chosen servants, was amongst the most interesting which transpired through the whole of his eventful life. The appointed period was now at hand for his endurance of betrayal and death; and he had gathered his apostles together that they might celebrate the feast which was intended to remain as a permanent memorial of his sufferings, and that they might listen to the last address of advice and consolation which he had to deliver before the mystery of his incarnation was accomplished. After they had partaken of their repast, the Saviour prefaced his intended disclosures by the performance of a remarkable symbolical action: "Supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." It may appear to be the immediate purport and signification of the reply to the inquiry of the apostle, that that apostle, at a future period of his earthly life, should be able fully to understand the nature, and feel the momentousness of the action performed by his Lord. Coming influences and coming events would explain what now appeared mysterious and entirely inappropriate. Yet, my brethren, it is to be believed, that the Lord Jesus was not adverting to the action in which he was then specially engaged, but to many things forthcoming in the process of his administration and his government: and it is to be believed also that he was not merely promising accessions of knowledge in this earthly state, but that he was promising those larger and more splendid accessions of knowledge which are reserved in the world that lies beyond the grave.

In founding upon the words of the Saviour an address to Christians of our own age and our own circumstances, it cannot be esteemed improper altogether to omit the temporal part of the promise as appertaining to the individual case of the apostle, and concentrate your attention entirely upon its association with a

future and eternal state. In this manner you observe, my hearers, the text will present us with two grand and distinguishing characteristics of the present and of the future world, as applying to all the disciples of Christ; and all must feel delighted with the announcement now presented to them, that what they know not *now*, they shall know *hereafter*. At once, with the view to which we have adverted, we shall direct your patient and devout attention, while we notice the text as containing, first, a statement of present ignorance; and secondly, as containing a promise of future illumination. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

First, we view the text as containing A STATEMENT OF PRESENT IGNORANCE. "What I do, thou knowest not now." In the personal history, and in the personal administration of the Lord Jesus, there were, as we have stated, many mysteries. The same truth is also to be regarded, and certainly in a far more extended range, in every department of spiritual being: there is much with regard to which it becomes the Christian to say that he knows not now. Let us illustrate the fact of his ignorance; and then let us assign its reasons.

First, we propose to *illustrate the fact of his present ignorance*. We are of course aware, and on a subject such as the present, it becomes us to acknowledge and to state, that God has been pleased to assist those faculties of the human mind which are adapted for, and which urge to the acquisition and the cultivation of knowledge, by the gift of his own inspired word; in which he has guarded against many momentous errors, and in which he has announced many most important truths, which it would have been impossible for mere reason itself distinctly to discover. Moreover, to those who are converted and redeemed, he has imparted and secured the influences of the Holy Spirit, by whose agency the meaning of the inspired word, which to the carnal mind is frequently obscure and impalpable, is more fully and clearly unfolded. Hence we are told that the Spirit of truth is given to "lead into all truth." We are told that "the things which God has prepared for them that love him" he hath "revealed to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." We are told that "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And we are told that he has given "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation" in the knowledge of himself and of his Son. All these arrangements for the illumination of the human mind require our careful and our ample acknowledgment, and for them our ardent and our lasting gratitude is due.

But allowing for the various gifts and classifications which are thus imparted, and the agencies which operate around us and in us, it must at the same time be perceived that there is a vast sphere over which as yet, ignorance casts her shade. In the very highest style and state of being we know but "in part," and we see "through a glass darkly." It may be easy, my friends, to refer at once to topics which will amply justify the use of the language employed. For example: we may remind you of your own existence, the construction of your corporeal frames, the constitution of your minds, the laws by which the functions of each are performed, the mode of their primeval union, of their present co-operation, and of their final separation: how much of mystery is here! We may remind you of those other finite beings—whose existence is

undiscoverable to sense, and of whom you know only from the words of revelation—denominated *angels*; their residence, their occupations, their enjoyments, their mode of exerting agencies within your own sphere, and upon your own souls: how much of mystery is here! We might remind you of God, a Trinity of persons in unity of essence; the high attributes which constitute his natural and moral character; and the processes by which he operates in the creation, and in the continued sustenance of the universe: how much of mystery is here! We might remind you of the mighty career of providential dispensations, either as applying to the regular course of individual life, or, in a yet larger and grander sphere, managing and controlling the mighty destinies of states and empires: how much of mystery is here! We might remind you of the scheme of redemption, involving in it the deathless interests of eternity—the preliminary government of no less than four thousand years—the incarnation, sufferings, death, and mediatorial glory of the Lord Jesus—and the work of the Holy Spirit on the soul, controlling, teaching, purifying, and preparing for eternity: how much of mystery is here! We might remind you of those scenes in which man is to mingle after the event of his final dissolution, the separate state of his spirit, the resurrection of his body, and those regions of eternal retribution where he is to reside among the immortal enjoyments of heaven, or the immortal miseries of hell: how much of mystery is here! Let your contemplation, my brethren, commune with the mighty topics which have thus passed before you in review, and doubtless you will be baffled and confounded: the noblest of your race must feel that industry, and learning, and intellect, and genius, are but as nothing. We stand at the base of a mountain, around whose side and at whose summit there gather thick clouds and darkness, through whose shadow no human eye can pierce. We stand on the verge of a vast ocean, across the mighty expanse of whose billows no bark can steer, and whose inscrutable abysses no line can fathom. Let the vanity of science be made to pass away for ever: let the children of the clay own their insignificance, and be humbled and prostrate in the dust.

Having, my brethren, thus illustrated the fact of ignorance, which probably few will be inclined to dispute, we must proceed briefly to *assign its reasons*. For it cannot be unimportant—circumstanced as man is, and possessing those tendencies by which he is in ordinary cases distinguished—that we should notice briefly, though clearly, why it is that such an allotment as this does pertain to man, and why there are such multitudes of topics, and such extensive arrangements, with regard to which he “knows not now.” We merely state the three following reasons:

The first reason is, *the limitation of our intellectual faculties*, arising partly from our inherent physical constitution, and partly from their being now identified with material and fleshly bodies.

The second is, *the pollution of our moral nature*. For we are sinners; we have corrupted our way upon the earth; we are hostile to God, and to the holiness and the purity of his nature; and we are prone to the habitual indulgence of those attributes which are prompted by, and which always terminate in, sense. And our sinfulness, my brethren, unquestionably debases our mental vision, enfeebles our mental energy, and clogs our mental operations; unfitting us for rapid and for enlarged acquirements; depluming the pinions on which alone the soul can soar, and well nigh chaining it to the earth.

The third is, *the positive design of God with regard to our present condition.* If there were no obstacles to the acquirements of knowledge of the nature to which we have adverted, yet it is his will that much shall be left impalpable to his people within the limits of our present state; and this in order to continue their fitness for the duties of life; in order to mature and perfect the graces which constitute their Christian character; in order especially to create and continue in them a vivid and burning anticipation of the final possession of another and a better world.

I do not, my brethren, attempt to amplify upon these various reasons, partly from want of time, and partly as the amplification would be remote from the purposes of general impression. But I would now impress on your minds individually the truths as they are now presented in their connexion; and then you will not think it strange, that a condition of imperfect and scanty knowledge continues as the present allotment of man; you will not think it strange that higher gifts wait not at his bidding, and that a stronger light beams not on his path; the spirit of sceptical repining against God, possessing a hold in so many bosoms, from yours will be banished and exorcised. You will be placed in that position, and be governed by those principles, which shall secure the reward of the mighty exaltation, when you shall be placed for ever amid the golden, the glowing, and the glorious visions of immortality.

We have thus, my brethren, presented to you, the first statement of the text, a statement of present ignorance. We must direct your attention more at large to the second department which it presents, namely, A PROMISE OF FUTURE ILLUMINATION.

We have already stated that we deem ourselves perfectly justifiable in applying the present promise to the world which is prepared for the people of Christ beyond the grave; that world which is the great and ultimate object of all our anticipations; that world which is emphatically known as "the recompense of the reward." Under this part of our subject we design to remind you that the future state is one of vast and expanded knowledge, and that the vast and expanded knowledge of the future state is identified with the highest interests of our being.

Observe that *the future state is one of vast and expanded knowledge.* It is clear, my brethren, from insurmountable testimony, that such is one of the main characteristics by which it is distinguished. It is to be remembered, from what we have generally been informed as to the nature of the celestial state, that the entrance into it, or the obstructions to the attainment of knowledge, so far as can be admitted to finite beings, will be removed and chased away; both that obstruction arising from the pollution of our moral natures, and that obstruction arising from the positive will and intention of God. It is to be remembered further, that men are there to be brought into immediate contact and communication with objects, the very existence of which they know now only from testimony and by faith. That sight imparts far higher opportunities for knowledge than faith is evident; and at the same time there are doubtless imparted certain direct and mental influences by which those objects are fully understood. There are also distinct statements of Scripture on the subject, the import of which is most delightfully distinct and clear. Take the language of the apostle Paul in reference to the future state, as contained in the



thirteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians. He is advocating, at the commencement of his address, the vast superiority of charity (or love) over the high miraculous gifts which appertained to early times. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child"—under the figure of childhood affording us a powerful and graphic representation of the present state of being—"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man"—the maturity of manhood being the appropriate representation of heaven—"when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly." I would observe on this passage, that what is here translated by the term "glass" was not, in apostolic times, a substance like that which forms the composition of the windows of our habitations, and which, as you are aware, scarcely constitutes any obstruction whatever to the entrance of light, or the observance of objects: but that it was composed generally of a thin stone which becomes by attenuation partially transparent—or of horn; which although admitting some light, and granting some vision, yet necessarily involved much imperfection and obscurity. Keeping this in view, you will be able to understand more thoroughly the nature of the apostolical statement. "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

If, my brethren, it were needful to add any thing to such a beautiful statement as this, we might remind you of those representations of heaven in which it is exhibited as a state where there is no night, and where there shine everlasting light and glory. These metaphors, in their signification, are intended to express the meridian and perfection of knowledge—knowledge being as the light and illumination of the soul. But thus it is, my brethren, when we anticipate futurity, as the people of Christ we must anticipate futurity; where the film will be removed, and where the shadows will be chased away: just like the mists of the morning which you have sometimes seen lying heavily and murkily on the surface of the earth, but which have been dispersed by the advancing power of the sun-beam, and leaving the landscape unfolded in all the tints of its loveliness, fertility, and beauty. And, my brethren, when the sun of heaven shall shine on us, then the secrets of our own being, and of all creation around us, will be developed in all their wonders. Then shall we know God, as far as God, the Infinite and Eternal, can be known to creatures mortal and finite. Then the whole of his providential dispensations and government will be explained: we shall be able to track the way which has been in the sea, and the footsteps which have been in the deep waters, and behold the grand combination of justice, and wisdom, and goodness. Then the treasures of eternal grace will be exhibited before us: every principle will be harmonized; every difficulty will be unravelled; we shall be able to comprehend with all saints the height, and breadth, and depth, and length, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, being ourselves filled with all the fulness of God. Such is the nature of the world we anticipate when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, and where we are to reside unchangeably and for ever.

It will be observed again, secondly, *that the knowledge, the most expanded knowledge, of the future state is identified with the highest interests of our being.* Those of us who have been in any measure associated in the present state with the acquisition of worldly science, have, doubtless, universally made the discovery, that there is much of difficulty in the study, and oftentimes much of pain in the acquisition, and in its results. Nor need I, in this congregation, remind you, that in many departments of human study there is much which directly tends on the one hand to pollute, and on the other to distress. Who, my brethren, that has engaged in those modes of operation and intellectual acquisition exhibited to us in the present state, has not felt for himself the justness of the mournful narrative given by the wisest of men, as the result of the studies and the investigations in which he had been engaged? Said Solomon, after the time of his perfected experience, "I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail"—the difficulty in the acquisition of wisdom—"hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works which are done under the sun: and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight"—by science: "and that which is wanting cannot be numbered"—by science. "I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Ask the philosopher over his midnight lamp: ask the statesman amid the intricacies of his cabinet: ask the man of observation amid the buffetings and tumults of the world: and one result, in fidelity, will be expressed—"Vanity of vanities! all is vanity and vexation of spirit!"

Now against the polluting and the distressing nature of human study and acquisition, it must be observed, that the knowledge of heaven is connected with our holiness, and is connected with our happiness.

Observe, my brethren, that the knowledge of the celestial state is associated with our *holiness*. You are well aware, that the moral constitution of man is of such a nature as that it is, uniformly and to a great extent, influenced by the nature of the intellectual studies in which he is engaged, and the truths with which he is conversant. Many examples of this may be acquired from the ordinary and unconverted states of life. Appealing to Christianity, it is important for us to remark, that all the objects of Christian knowledge which, in the present life, are placed before the servants of God for their study and contemplation, are identified in the divine arrangement with the purity and the advancement of holiness in the soul. There is a very beautiful prayer presented by the apostle of the Gentiles for the believing Colossians, in which their advance in progressive holiness and preparation for heaven is recorded. He says, "for this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you"—(now mark the interchange of the terms)—"and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strength-

ened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." My brethren, if there be such a connexion between Christian knowledge and holiness in the present world, the argument from analogy must be conclusive: we must expect that the knowledge of heaven will be also connected with the purity and the holiness of heaven. We do not mean to assert, that the knowledge of heaven is to be considered as the efficient cause of purity and of holiness: but we do assert, that it will be its constant and inseparable concomitant, and the instrument in the hand of God for preserving that immaculate purity by which the glorified saints are to be distinguished. Possessing, my brethren, such knowledge from such a source, and for such causes, it is impossible for the inhabitants of heaven to fall. They must, in consequence of their connexion with the truths which are presented to them, remain without one spot of sin to hide the beauty of their holiness: they must remain basking directly in the light of that beatific vision which refuses to shine for a moment on the impure and the unholy: they must remain exhibiting, as far as finite beings can exhibit, the image and the likeness of the Eternal Jehovah: they must remain qualified by their own perfections to cast their crowns before the throne of Him who sitteth upon the throne; paying homage to his holiness, as if it absorbed and concentrated in itself every other perfection and attribute of his nature; and uniting with the spirits who veil their faces with their wings, while there bursteth forth the cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and which is, and which is to come!"

But then, my brethren, you observe, that the knowledge of the celestial state is also associated with our *happiness*. If there be such a connexion existing as that we have stated between knowledge and holiness, it must then also follow, that there is a connexion between knowledge and happiness, as holiness is inseparable from happiness. But we go beyond this. What must be the result of those contemplations which the heavenly world fully and absolutely brings to our view? Take, for example, what the saints who are glorified are to contemplate within the system of *providence*. They are to see it in its correspondence, through the course of successive ages, with the destinies of empires, continents, and kingdoms: they are to see it as connected with all the minute and delicate affairs of private and individual life; watching it from the time when it rocked them in the cradle to the time when it committed them to the dust; ascertaining why here they were the subjects of elevation, there of depression; here of friendship, there of bereavement; here of sorrow, there of joy; and enabling them to understand, distinctly and beautifully, that all things—all the alternations and elevations of providence, of blessings and bereavements, of sorrow and of joy—were another, and another, and another step of that mysterious process by which they were urged still forward towards the heaven which they had obtained. Then will be exhibited, in full and palpable perfection, the fact which we are now called upon to believe (yet, ah, with how much difficulty!) that "all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose." And who can contemplate what the saints of God are to accrue of knowledge in the sphere of providence, without perceiving that here is a source of perennial gratitude, extacy, and bliss!

Again, we must observe what they are to acquire in the yet mightier, yet more wonderful, and yet more attractive sphere of *redemption*. They shall commune with the distant councils of eternity, and be permitted to unlock and to read the secret purposes of the divine decrees. They shall be enabled to observe how, from the introduction of moral evil into the world, which thereby became defiled, polluted, and lost, was to arise the wonderful system of recovery, and of almost universal mercy. They shall trace the history of that mercy through the preliminary government of four thousand years, exhibited in the shadows and types, in the blood of victims, and in the inspired predictions of prophets and seers. They shall come to Bethlehem, and there understand how and why it was, that He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God was laid thus as a little babe in the manger, because there was no room for him in the inn. They shall go forward, and understand how and why it was, that while the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, he had not where to lay his head. They shall go to Gethsemane, and shall understand how and why it was, that there an angel came from heaven to strengthen him, while his sweat became as great drops of blood falling to the ground. They shall go to Calvary, and shall understand how and why it was, that a mysterious darkness, from the sixth to the ninth hour, wrapped in its mysterious shadow the nations of the earth; while from the midst of that darkness, and as the hour terminated, at the magic time the voice issued, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and again in a louder tone, "It is finished," when he gave up the ghost. They shall go to the sepulchre, and understand how and why it was, that he came forth on the morning of the third day, bursting the cerements of the grave, and standing the conqueror of death and him that had the power of it. They shall go to Olivet, and understand how and why it was, that he sprung from the confines of this sublunary sphere, and in the clouds of heaven went upward to his Father and to our Father, to his God and to our God: and gazing then at the right hand of the majesty on high, shall understand how and why it was, that he stood not merely as a King, but as a Priest, interceding in all the wrestling and fervency of mediatorial energy for the final salvation of his church. Brethren! think you not, that to understand the mystery of godliness, that God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory; think you not, that to have every principle harmonized, and every difficulty unravelled—to have the cabinet of mercy unlocked in its most secret recesses, and to behold wonder after wonder of infinite and everlasting love, shall not be a source of perennial extacy and bliss? O! it is *this*, it is *this*, that causes every eye to glisten, and every heart to beat with rapture! It is *this* that strings every harp, that harmonizes every song, that swells every chorus, that perpetuates every extacy, and that perfects every joy! It is *this*, it is *this*, which causes the universal acclaim of heaven's rapture to ring throughout all the mighty and hallowed inspirations of its temple, from all its numberless and yet innumerable regions—"Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Thus, my brethren, the illumination of heaven gives, beyond the other developments of the wonders of redemption, fulness of joy and pleasures that are for evermore. The tree of knowledge hides no serpent within the shadow of its foliage, and instils no death in the taste of its

fruit. It grows in a paradise open to the intrusion of no spoiler; and it is destined to be the scene of no fall. It is a tree of *life*, as well as a tree of *knowledge*. It is fanned by the breezes that are breathed from the scene of the beatific vision; it is cherished by the river that rolls its soft, pellucid, and crystal stream from the throne of God, and of the Lamb: and there is not a leaf that clothes it, there is not a flower that adorns it, there is not a cluster that enriches it, but what is all ambrosial with rapture that cannot be decaying, or cloying, or dull.

My brethren, you must pardon me—if indeed I require pardon—that the high contemplations of heaven and of heavenly illumination, should have carried me somewhat beyond, perhaps, the bounds of ordinary excitement and ordinary feeling. But anxious to have my spirit upward, as in the very midst of that world of which I have been speaking, I am anxious, too, that *your* spirits should obtain the elevation of mine. And if there has been one who has been cleaving to the earth, I would have him to hear a voice as speaking from that heaven-to-night, saying to him, “Come up hither: come up hither.” Brethren I ask you whether, in the contemplations which have now been brought before you of providence and of grace, you do not feel yourselves as if put into another atmosphere, surrounded by other objects, and, like the servant of the prophet, when his eyes were opened, beholding chariots of fire and horses of fire?

But, my brethren, this must have a limit; and placing before you, as we have done, the statement of our present ignorance while existing in this sublunary life, and the promise of future illumination, shewing how that illumination is associated with your holiness, and with your eternal happiness, let me request you now to observe one or two practical impressions which ought to arise as the conclusion of the whole.

First, cherish *Patience*. There is much within the present sphere that you cannot understand, in providence and in redemption. Is infidelity right—to use the pointed language of Addison, in one of the best of his addresses to freethinkers in the *Guardian*—“Is infidelity right, when it concludes that because it does not understand, therefore the thing of which it is ignorant is not to be understood?” Is it right, my brethren, for those who are numbered professedly among the people of God, to rebel against certain arrangements of providence, or to reject certain announced principles of redemption, precisely, be it remembered, for the very reason assigned by infidelity? No, if it be the will of God, in connexion with other circumstances, that but a partial amount of knowledge should be obtained in the present state, and that full developments are to be expected in the state that remains beyond the grave, the right result is humility, patience, and submission of mind. And let me exhort you, especially you who are young, and whose minds, perhaps, are inclined to speculative inquiry, and therefore to enter into the scenes of scepticism and infidelity, rest, implicitly rest, on the testimony of the sure word of prophecy; and although clouds and darkness may now be round about Jehovah, be certain that “justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne:” and stop till that period, when the scales shall fall from your eyes, and when you shall have the developments of immortality. Be patient, submissive, humble in your minds:

“Wait the great teacher, Death, and God adore.”

Again, cherish *Desire*. And who does not desire heaven? The mariner on the ocean desires his rest: the labourer desires his home: the warrior longs to retire, even from the field of fame, where he can doff off his armour, and lay down his weapons in peace and domestic joy. And who, my brethren, tossed upon the ocean of time, labouring in the husbandry of time, fighting amid the conflicts of time, longs not for the period when he shall know even as also he is known? Does the man pining with hunger desire the feast? Does the parched traveller in the desert desire the well-spring of cool and refreshing waters? Our souls surely desire the river of the water of life; and standing as on the summit of Pisgah, with the little remnant of the wilderness before us, and beyond it the stream of Jordan, and then the fair fields of Canaan, with all their amaranthine bowers, with their green and immortal spring, who asks not that the time may come when he shall enter into the bosom of his repose? We have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. We ask, "How long, O Lord, how long? When shall we come and appear before God?" We aspire; "O that I had wings as a dove! then would I flee away and be at rest."

"O, when shall my spirit exchange,  
This cell of corruptible clay,  
For mansions celestial, and range  
Through realms of ineffable day?"

"Ye palaces, sceptres, and crowns,  
Your pride with disdain I survey:  
Your pomps are but shadows and sounds,  
That pass in a moment away.

"The crown which my Saviour bestows,  
Yon firmament's sun shall outshine:  
My joy everlastingly flows;  
My God, my Redeemer is mine."

Again, my brethren, cherish *Evangelical Preparation*. You enter not into heaven, the world of abundant knowledge, perfect holiness and perfect happiness, excepting by the *way* to heaven. Brethren, your aspirations and desires must be connected with the state of preparation which is demanded by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. What saith it? "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." What saith it? "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." What saith it? "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved." Repent, believe: prove repentance and prove faith by holiness and devotedness of life. *This, this* is the way to heaven: and, my hearers, if you tread not the path which is described, never, never will you enter into the palmy and glorious state of which we have spoken. No; never, never will your eyes gaze upon the King in his beauty, and the land which now lieth very far off. Unknown will be its cloudless sky, and its everlasting sunshine. Unknown will be its gates of pearl, and its walls of precious stones, and its streets that are paved with gold. Unknown will be its imperishable flowers, its unfading fruits, and its ambrosial fragrance; its spirits made perfect, its holy occupations, its deep songs of joy: all unknown—for ever unknown! O then other revelations will rise upon your eye, and the scenery of another and a

far other world will be disclosed. Disclosed the apostate spirit whose brow with the thunder-scar is graven; for once he "dared defy the omnipotent to arms." Disclosed the apostate spirits who, like him, were hurled from the crystal battlements of heaven, and are now reserved in chains and darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Disclosed the lost inhabitants of earth—hateful and hating one another; the convulsion agonizing every countenance; the curse or the shriek issuing from every lip; and the fire, scorching and yet imperishable, burning in every heart. *Disclosed!* Aye, not disclosed merely, but *felt*: felt, remember, by yourselves, in all the dread intensity of the agonies of hell. There, sinner, is a revelation of the immortality for you! For *you!* What! sitting beneath the sound of the Gospel, and pointed in the path-way to heaven! For *you*, in whose ears the language of mercy is incessantly sounding, and before whose eyes the cross, the magic sign of salvation, is constantly uplifted! For *you?* Who amongst you can dwell with the devouring fire? Who amongst you can dwell with the everlasting burnings?

Brethren, the spell is upon you; the spell is upon you: I conjure you not to break it. No; follow its leading onward to Calvary: wash there yet at its bidding, in the fountain that has been opened for sin. Led onward by the cross, in the pilgrimage that leads towards heaven, and then passing the boundary that separates one world from another, on you, in danger of perishing and ruin, shall beam the brightness of the immortality of heaven.

Brethren, my last Sabbath is now closed, and the last words of this sermon are pronounced. Only one thing I ask: it is, that you will retire to meditate and to pray: and no rest shall be given to your spirits, until those spirits can point upwards to the stars and sunbeams of heaven, and look at them but as the type of the far higher glory of that world where you shall shine forth in the kingdom of your Father. Amen

## CONVERSION.

“THE experience of those who are called out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel is exceedingly various; or in other words, the history of one man’s conversion is often exceedingly unlike the history of another man’s conversion. There are some who are visited with an alarming sense of danger, and are long kept in a state of pain and of perplexity, and have much of disquietude in their spirits, ere they find their way to a place of rest and a place of enlargement. They have to describe a course of dark and stormy agitation among the terrors of the law, ere they arrive at the secure resting-place of Gospel consolation; and many are those on whose desolate hearts the light of the offered reconciliation never beamed till they had been preyed upon for months and years, by the remorse of a present guilt, and the dread of a coming vengeance. In old Scottish authors, this is called ‘law work;’ and you often read of it in religious lives. But though this be frequent in the history of conversion, it is far from being universal. Indeed why should it? There is a message of pardon from heaven at our doors, and its very first demand upon us is that we should give credence to it. If any one claim upon us be preferable to another, surely it is the claim of him who cannot lie that we should believe in his testimony. Are we to hold the message of God in abeyance, until we have gone some round of mental discipline and experience that may liken the history of our translation from darkness to light, to that of some fellow-mortal who hath gone before us? Are we to postpone our faith in an actual report brought to us from the upper sanctuary, till we have brought the frame of our spirit to its right adjustment by engaging in a course of certain feelings and certain fluctuations? Meanwhile, let us recollect that an embassy from above is waiting to be heard—that it is charged with the tidings of an atonement for sin with which God is satisfied, if we are but satisfied—that we lie under a peremptory invitation to look unto Christ, and to be saved—and that the overtures of peace and forgiveness are before us, of which we are expressly bidden to entertain and close with them. Some there are again whom the Gospel hath dawned upon in the very outset of their religious inquiries; and no sooner did it so shine upon them than they rejoiced. The earliest morning of their Christianity ushered in gladness, so that they were scarcely sensible of any tempestuous passage midway from the peace of nature to the peace of the Gospel. The call to believe they felt to be imperative; and coming, as it did, with what they were made to recognize as a voice of authority, they permitted not the lapse of a single day between the conviction that they were great sinners, and the consolation that Christ was a great Saviour—they felt that they had no right to suspend their acquiescence in the truth of what God had said, till they had completed a given period of sighing and of sorrowing because of their unworthiness; and so at the very earliest announcement of the tidings of good joy they were joyful. Their transition seems to have been immediate from a state of ungodliness to a sense of God, as their reconciled Father. Some have been made alive unto God, first as an angry offended judge, and then as their reconciled friend; others, again, are drawn by the cords of love without being driven by the terrors of the law, and instead of being awakened by the thunders of its violated authority, they are awakened, like the shepherds of Bethlehem, by a music of a softer and sweeter utterance that preaches peace on earth, and good-will even to the guiltiest of all its generations.”—*Dr CHALMERS.*



## THE STATE AND PROSPECTS OF THE DEPARTED.

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REV. J. BLACKBURN,

FETTER LANE CHAPEL, DECEMBER 17, 1835.

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And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence."—LUKE, xvi. 22—26.

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THAT was a sublime vision of the Son of God which the Apostle John enjoyed in the Isle of Patmos. He beheld his risen Lord in circumstances so commanding and glorious, that an emblematic description could alone express its majesty. The details of those emblems are not connected with my present subject. One symbol, however, the Saviour claimed, which is connected with it: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death." Those keys he possessed, not to indicate his servitude, as if he were the great jailor of the universe, keeping culprit spirits under his power till the time of retribution should come, but to indicate his entire control over the time of our departure out of the present state, and over all that long period that may intervene between the hour of our death and of his coming to pronounce the final sentence of the judgment-day.

Now, as the Saviour has presented us with this interesting view of his own official character, surely, my brethren, there is no individual to whom we can listen with so much safety and comfort as the great Teacher himself, "the faithful and true witness," when he draws aside the veil, and discloses the unseen world to view, as in the passage before us. I know, indeed, that it is usually regarded as a parable, though it is certainly not so *introduced* to our notice. But even if we assume that it be a parabolical description, yet, when we remember who is the author of it, we must at once believe that he would not deign to employ any imagery which were not warranted by the facts of the case. Parables may be regarded as moral paintings, and much of the moral painter's art is displayed in harmonizing their several parts. When you look upon an historical picture, you see the principal group stand prominently before you, in all the faithfulness of historical representation: but the minor details of the scene are filled up and managed according to the skill of the

artist, and with a view to secure general effect. So when we study the parables of our Lord, it is our duty to observe the leading truth as it is presented prominently to our view, and to regard the lesser circumstances as intended principally to harmonize and fill up the picture. I hold it therefore to be a sound canon of interpretation, that we ought not to build doctrine upon parable unless we find that doctrine elsewhere sustained by the express statements of the Sacred Scriptures.

As I could find no other passage in the word of God which described such opposite characters and circumstances in the unseen world, I have been induced to select a part of this interesting parable as the basis of my discourse upon "the state and prospects of the departed." I believe, however, that what I have to say will not rest on the authority of this parable only, but upon various other portions of God's word, which I shall present for your candid and prayerful consideration.

Now, it is my design, in discussing the subject that has been announced for the present lecture, to make four observations, in connexion with the passage I have read.

The first is, that **THE SPIRITS OF MEN ARE IN A CONSCIOUS STATE AFTER THEIR BODIES ARE DEAD.** This is taught in the twenty-second and twenty-third verses: "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." Here we learn the rich man was buried; no doubt with all the pomp and circumstance attending his rank in society: and the poor beggar died, and received a funeral, according with the humble circumstances in which he departed. But though each found his appropriate grave, yet, both their spirits were conscious in another state: the one reposed in Abraham's bosom, and the other lifted up his eyes being in torment. There can be no doubt, therefore, that our Lord meant, by this representation, to teach that the spirits of men are in a state of conscious existence after their bodies are dead.

It cannot be expected (having so wide a subject before me to-night) that I should enter on an elaborate argument against the opinions of the materialist. He maintains the dependence of the spiritual principle in man, upon the organization of his brain, and therefore contends, that when disease shall derange, or death extinguish the animal life of man, all consciousness is brought into abeyance, and the mind falls with the body into a state of ruin, till the trumpet of the archangel shall call both to organization and life again at the resurrection. Now, though I cannot argue at this time, at length, against this opinion, yet I must avow my convictions, that it is alike opposed to science, to our own consciousness, and to the word of God. I think it is opposed to *science*. Take an atom: can that atom think? My body and yours are made up of myriads of atoms: can any combination of atoms possess thought? It is, indeed, maintained, that thought depends upon the organization of the brain; and that no injury can come to the brain without affecting the powers of the mind. But it is a notorious fact, that the most serious injuries have been inflicted on the brain without affecting the powers of thought. A medical practitioner told me but yesterday, that he has removed an ounce of the medullary substance of the brain, and yet that the patient retained possession of thought and reason. How then

can it be said, that the mind depends upon the organization of the brain—that the injury of the one is the injury of the other—when here is an instance of a large portion removed by the knife of a surgeon, and yet the man lives, and thinks I *hōka*, therefore, that this view is opposed to experimental science. *Our own consciousness* also is opposed to it. There is a stirring of immortality within the bosom of every man, and we instinctively feel, that we shall live when our bodies are dead. It requires no small portion of sophistry to resist the testimony of our consciousness upon this question. And if there be any individual here who has screwed up his firmness to that point, I would ask him, as an honest man, whether the labour it has cost him to bring his mind to that opinion does not prove how deeply it is seated in the convictions of mankind! But our authoritative appeal is not to the testimony of science, or to the conscious emotions of our own minds, but to *the Word of God*. This holy volume we regard as a revelation which opens to our view the unseen world, and brings life and immortality to light. Now, its statements go upon the principle, that an immortal soul is superadded to the animal body. Thus, in the narrative of the creation of man, it is declared, that God formed his body out of the dust of the ground, and that he “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” Thus also, Solomon has declared, that at the close of life, “the dust” speaking of the body, “shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God that gave it” Our Lord Jesus has sanctioned the same idea, when, speaking of persecution in its most cruel forms, he said to his disciples—“Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell,” (Matt. x. 28.) Now, had our Lord known, that the soul is dependant for consciousness upon the organization of the body, and that, when animal life is destroyed, the conscious being of the individual is placed in abeyance till the resurrection, could he have employed language like this? Language, which in so decided a manner points out the separate existence of the soul after the body has been destroyed.

The separate existence of the soul after the body is dead was also believed by the pious Jews, who made it the occasion of devoutly commending their departing spirits to the hands of their God and Father. David exclaimed, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.” The martyred Stephen cried, “Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commit my spirit.” And the Saviour himself said, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.” Surely these illustrious saints, who were the subjects of the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and also the Son of God himself, would not be permitted to believe and sanction the separate and conscious existence of the disembodied spirit, if that doctrine were not founded in truth. These remarks, I trust, are sufficient for the first part of the subject.

The second observation I would make is, that **THESE CONSCIOUS SPIRITS ARE REMOVED AT DEATH INTO A SEPARATE STATE**. I am afraid that we do not sufficiently realize that great change which the act of death will effect in us. It is very certain, brethren, that in our present state, we are under the influence of two very distinct and opposing faculties. These have been called the sensual or imaginative faculty, and the moral sense. The sensual or imaginative powers of our nature are naturally affected by sentient things, while the

moral sense is mainly influenced by the contemplation of the character of God, and the eternal principles of truth and rectitude. Now when our spirits shall leave the body they will be delivered from the presence and the power of those sentient things which now oppress them and interrupt their contemplation of the holy and the blessed. Then the mind will be brought into the unveiled contemplation of God, and of the great realities of truth and holiness, and will apprehend those things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which it hath not entered into the imagination of men to conceive.

The spirit, thus disembodied, enters upon that state which *is generally described in the term before us*. It is said of the rich man, "that in *hell* he lifted up his eyes." Now, my brethren, I think this a very unfortunate rendering of the word "*hades*" in the New Testament. *Hell*, in our popular theological language, means the place of torment: but the word which is so translated "*ᾅδης*," I am sure ought not to be thus restricted, for it includes in its usual sense the whole unseen world, while the place of final suffering is always described by another word, *γεέννα*. Concerning the English word "*hell*," it would, perhaps, be interesting to mention what I think is its history. It is derived from an Anglo-saxon word *HEL-AN*, which is, "to cover." Hence the old English verb, *to hell*, and an old writer remarks, "*Hell* hath an apt appellation as being *helled over*, that is to say, *hidden or covered* in low obscurity." Thus a "*heller*" is a man that is employed to cover anything: and I am told, that in the West of England to this day, a thatcher who covers in a barn, or a slater who covers in a house, is called, in the provincial dialect "a *heller*"—an individual who covers in a thing. Therefore *hell*, in the popular language of our forefathers, meant "the covered, the concealed place, quite irrespective of happiness or suffering." Now this, in my judgment, is precisely the meaning of the word *hades*; it is *the covered place*, and neither describes heaven nor the place of final torment, but that separate state into which the disembodied spirits, both of the good and the bad, are called at death to enter. The word which is employed to describe the final place of torment, as I have said, *gehennah*, is quite distinct in its origin and import: and those who can consult the Greek Testament will find that wherever the final sufferings of the body after the resurrection are spoken of, there this word is used; but wherever the separate state of the soul is spoken of there the other word, *hades*, is used. Thus, for example, where our Lord says, "Fear not them who can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but fear him which after he hath killed hath power to cast into *hell*;" he does not use *ᾅδης*, the *covered place*, but *γεέννα*, the place of torment. This is the case in our text: he does not use the word expressive of the place of final suffering, but that which conveys the idea of concealment. The equivalent word used by the writers of the Old Testament partakes of the same general character with *hades*, שְׁאוֹל *Sheol*. It is used, Dr. George Campbell observes, as corresponding with the other, and "signifies the state of the dead in general, without regard to the goodness or badness of the persons, their happiness or misery." Many passages might be quoted to illustrate this sense: but I will only take one of the most plain and striking. In Genesis, xxxvii. we find that news was brought to Jacob that his son Joseph had been devoured by wild beasts. His treacherous brethren brought the torn and stained garments of Joseph, and poor Jacob wept over it, thinking that his son

had been devoured by the jaws of the ravenous beasts of the forest. "And he put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave (*Sheol*), unto my son mourning." Now he could never have meant that he should go into the sepulchre where his son was buried; for he supposed that his son had found a tomb in the stomachs of ravenous beasts: and therefore he must refer to the unseen place, the covered state: "I shall go down into the unseen place to my son, mourning."

I will only notice a single passage from the New Testament confirmatory of this sense, where it is said (Revelations, vi. 8), "And I looked, and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and *hell* followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." Now it must be a very uncharitable conclusion to suppose that all that perished under the fearful judgments here announced, whenever they occurred, went to the infernal place of torment. Understand the word, however, in the sense for which I contend, and its meaning is plain and obvious. The spirits of those who died of the plagues were, by the act of death, transferred to the separate, the concealed state.

Having thus shewn you how this state is generally described, allow me secondly, to remark, *that this separate state is effectually divided.* In the parable before us we are plainly told, that the beggar was in Abraham's bosom, that the rich man was in a state of suffering, and that between them both there was a gulf fixed. Concerning "Abraham's bosom," I may remark that it is a phrase frequently employed by the Jews expressive of their veneration and love for the great father of their nation, and friend of God, Abraham. If we would understand this phrase, we must recollect that the Easterns, at their social entertainments, were in the habit of sitting on mats or carpets on the floor, or on raised sofas around the table, and that the most favoured guests sat next to the master of the feast. Thus, we read that John, the beloved friend of our Lord, sat next his master at the paschal supper, and "there was leaning on Jesus one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved." (John, xiii. 23.) Thus, in the language of the Jews, John was in Jesus's bosom—possessed of the privilege of immediate and endearing converse. So when it is said that Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom, it means, that he was entertained by Abraham the patriarch of all the faithful, and permitted to enjoy with him all the endearments of social intercourse.

On the other hand it is said, that the rich man was in a state of torment, that he cried under the suffering of the flame, and that he asked for water to cool his tongue. For the right interpretation of this part of the parable we must recal our introductory remarks; for I conceive that much of this constitutes what I have called the filling up of the picture. It is said that the rich man was buried: all that appertained to him capable of suffering from the action of fire was then in the grave, actually buried in the sepulchre of his fathers. When our Lord, therefore, said that the rich man cried, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue," he merely exhibited things spiritual by things material; and taught that in this separate state his disembodied spirit was

called to suffer that anguish which a clear view of the rectitude and holiness of God, and of his own depravity and guilt, will occasion to every unpardoned transgressor in another world. Let me not be understood here as if I denied the existence of a place of torment for the finally impenitent, and which is represented "as a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." No! But still this is most obvious, that during the whole of that period which intervenes between death and the resurrection, while the bodies of the departed sleep in the grave, and their spirits only are in the other world, it is impossible that their bodies can be the subject of the torments described in this passage; and it must therefore describe that anguish which remorse of conscience must occasion under a sense of an eternal separation from God, the fountain of all good, and of banishment to a hopeless state of self-accusation and despair.

Further to illustrate my idea of the separate condition of the departed, I will again advert to what is said of Lazarus. I regard it to be descriptive of that state which is called in the New Testament "Paradise." Our Lord Jesus said to the dying thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Most individuals, I presume, understand by that expression that he intended to take him that day to heaven. Paradise, however, I regard as a portion of the unseen world distinct from the abode of complete felicity which is in the third heavens. Thither the spirit of the pardoned thief and of his merciful Lord entered, and there possessed as much felicity as disembodied spirits can enjoy. To confirm this idea, I would remind you of what our Lord remarked to Mary in the garden when she came to embrace him: "Touch me not," or, as some read it, "Detain me not," "for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Now this occurred after the resurrection of our Lord, whose spirit had been three days separated from his dead body, which was laid in a new sepulchre of Joseph. Still he addresses his friend, "Now do not attempt to detain me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father: but go and tell my brethren, that I am about to ascend to my Father and their Father; to my God, and their God. I told you that it is expedient for you that I should go away: I now go to prepare a place for you; and when I come again at the last day, I will receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also."

This view is further sustained, in my judgment, by the expression of the Psalmist, and which the apostle Peter expressly applied to our Lord: "Thou wilt not leave his soul in *hell*, nor suffer thine holy one to see corruption." Some individuals, indeed, have held the most extraordinary opinion that in order to the complete satisfaction of the death of Christ, it was necessary that he should actually suffer the torments of the damned; and they therefore interpret this passage in the popular sense of the word, and maintain that our Lord actually descended into *hell*, the place of suffering for the guilty and impenitent. But it seems to me utterly needless, if not utterly absurd to assume this, because, I take it, that the sufferings of guilty minds must consist in a consciousness of their guilt, in a perception of the folly and madness of their impotent rebellion against the government of a holy and gracious God. Now as the Saviour could never be the conscious subject of personal guilt, because he was holy, harmless, and undefiled, so he could never know the torments of remorse which is felt by the impenitent. To maintain, therefore, the popula:

sense of the word, in reference to our Lord's sufferings, appears forced and most unnatural; but, on the other hand, if we understand it to refer to his entrance into the unseen world, that sense seems simple and obvious: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption;" that is, "My body shall not corrupt in the tomb, and my soul shall not remain in the separate state; but my soul and body shall be re-united again, to part no more." Thus the Saviour became the first fruits of them that slept, the blessed earnest of the resurrection of all his people.

I know that St. Paul's words, "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better," are cited against the interpretation I now maintain. Brethren, I do not think that this and similar passages materially affect my argument. If our blessed Saviour be divine, he must be omnipresent. We rejoice in his gracious presence in the sanctuary, where our spirits are often blessed with unspeakable delight. Now there is doubtless a much higher manifestation of his presence in the paradisaic regions of the separate state—a manifestation which may fill the disembodied spirit with unutterable felicity; and yet it may not be admitted into the holiest of all, where the presence of his glorified humanity is actually enjoyed. I conceive that the soul of a believer, separate from the body, possesses, in the unseen state, all that tranquillity, rest, and joy—all that elevation of thought and feeling which is necessary to its present blessedness, and which will be preparatory to a higher and perfect state of existence. Such a state is surely sufficient to justify the desire which St. Paul expressed to depart, without concluding that at once he would depart to the blessedness of heaven itself.

Look, on the other hand, to the condition of the wicked in the unseen world. We have already seen that the torment which our Lord described is not material suffering, but that anguish which remorse of conscience will occasion, which self-condemnation will excite—that conflict and distress which the society of wicked spirits will aggravate. Many a transgressor in the separate state will find himself associated with those whom he has corrupted by his principles or conduct, and will find, in their bitter reproaches, a fearful addition to his own miseries. The prophet Isaiah, in his fourteenth chapter, has described the coming of the spirit of the great king of Babylon into the infernal regions with much sublimity, and has peculiarly marked the scorn and insult which other spirits would then pour forth upon that cruel spoiler. The passage is too long for citation, but Bishop Louth's version of part of it deserves your notice:—

"Hades from beneath is moved because of thee, to meet thee at thy coming:

"He roseth for thee the mighty dead, all the great chiefs of the earth;

"He maketh to rise up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

"All of them shall accost thee, and shall say unto thee:

"Art thou, even thou, too, become weak as we? Art thou made like unto us?"

Now this passage illustrates the pain and woe which a disembodied spirit feels when it meets in Hades those with whom it has transgressed on earth. For here the proud king of Babylon is made to confront the princes he had oppressed and slaughtered by his murderous power, and he had sent before him into the unseen world: he is met and taunted by them: "Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?" There is no compassion among the wicked in the infernal state; and therefore they cry tauntingly to him, as if their own sorrows were mitigated by a consciousness that he also suffered with them.

But we must further observe, that the separate state is not only thus described and divided, but that it is *unalterably divided*. In the controversy with the Roman Catholic Church, you will perceive in their opinions a singular mixture of truth and error. They understand the doctrine of a separate state more clearly than many Protestants; but their mistake lies in the supposition that a remedial process passes on the mind in that state, and that opportunities for repentance and reformation are afforded them. They teach that the woes that are felt there are purgatorial in their character, and ameliorate the depravity, and change the minds of those who endure them. Now this notion is alike unphilosophical and unscriptural. Unphilosophical, for it is not in the nature of punishment to soften the heart and excite affection for him who inflicts the penalty. It is unscriptural; for Solomon has said, "As the tree falls so it shall lie." In our text we learn that the rich man prayed for water, but none was given him. He prayed that a messenger might be dispatched to the house of his brethren, but no messenger was sent. We may safely infer from this, that our Lord wished to intimate that the prayers of the departed would not avail for themselves. And surely if their own prayers will not help them, we cannot imagine that the prayers of others will be available. It is an assumption, unsupported by scriptural authority or sound reason. Between the righteous and the wicked, even in the intermediate state, "there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot: neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." Their state is unalterably distinguished now, which is only a prelude to that final separation when they shall be respectively placed at the right or the left hand of the Judge of all.

The third general remark which I am to offer is, **THESE DEPARTED SPIRITS HAVE COGNIZANCE OF EVENTS CONNECTED WITH THEIR FUTURE DESTINIES.** The subject under consideration is "the state and prospects of the departed," and therefore it is necessary that I should illustrate this remark, *in reference to the case of the righteous*. We assert their consciousness in the unseen world, and if so, how are their minds employed? Our Lord informs us that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "live unto God," by which I understand they are engaged in acts of communion and worship. Still I believe that departed saints have a knowledge of the affairs of the church on earth, and, as "a great cloud of witnesses," contemplate, with the liveliest interest, the efforts of its suffering members, and also anticipate the final triumph of the Mediatorial kingdom at the consummation of all things.

A passage in the Revelations will illustrate this: "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Now this scene exhibits the court of the temple in which stood the great altar of burnt-offering. At the base of that altar the victims that were to be sacrificed were slain. Now the martyrs of God have been thus offered up. The apostles often speak of themselves as sacrifices. Paul declares that he was "ready to be offered up," and that "the time of his departure was at hand." Here the martyrs of God are heard to cry, like the blood from the foot of the altar, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Are these disembodied spirits of the martyrs vindictive and revengeful? Far from it,



but they address the Holy, and the True; they ask Him who is faithful when he will fulfil his threatenings: They ask Him who is holy when He will maintain the purity of his government, by overthrowing the antichristian powers that oppress his church. Thus the vision teaches, that the spirits of martyrs are conscious of events that are transpiring in connexion with the church on earth, and are longing for the day when God shall come forth and sweep with the besom of destruction every antagonist power from this globe, and when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ.

It is also said of the saints departed, in the same book, that "they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Think you that they have no anxiety about the success of those labours? St. Peter, when writing his second epistle in the immediate prospect of his own death, tells his brethren, "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover, I will endeavour that ye may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance." Why was he thus anxious that these things should be had in remembrance among them after he had ceased to live. Surely he felt that his own happiness would be connected with it; for "they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as stars for ever and ever." One cannot but imagine, that in the separate state the spirits of the just are looking forward to their recompense in heaven, when, united to their glorified bodies, God shall give them the crown of righteousness which fadeth not away, which he has promised, not only to his apostles, but to all them also who love his appearing.

So I think, secondly, *there is a melancholy anticipation in the minds of the wicked.* They have "a fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." The rich man in the parable dreaded that his brethren should come into that place. Was this the effect of benevolence? There can be no benevolence in the bosoms of the damned; only the malignant dispositions of our nature can exist in such spirits. It was the dictate, not of benevolence, but of selfishness: "I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." As if he had said, "O send to my brethren to warn them of this place. I invited them to my table; I inebriated them with my wine; I corrupted them with my voluptuousness. My station in society was their ruin; and they are posting on hither, following me to perdition. O stop them, lest on coming here they should taunt me with my malignant influence over them, and thus add to my woe."

The Apostle Paul, in his epistle to Timothy, remarks, that "some men's sins go before hand to judgment: and some follow after;" and for this reason I presume, because the moral good or evil which results from the virtues or sins of men is often not completed for ages. This intermediate state, therefore, in reference both to the righteous and the wicked, appears like the wise arrangement of the Almighty, to give time for the full operation and development of personal influence, whether for good or evil. Has the influence of the labours of Paul terminated? We read his epistles, and are still blessed by his exhibitions of the truth. Are the effects of Luther's labours terminated? He gave an impulse to Europe, which yet shakes the world. Has the influence of the labours of Whitfield yet terminated? O, no; they will continue to tell on

the public mind of England and America for ages to come. Blessed men, "their works do follow them." Age after age brings before the Eternal the fruits of their spirituality, their devotedness, their self-denial, their prayerfulness. God made them the instruments of untold good to the world; and will certainly reward the grace which he himself bestowed. And so, on the other hand, have the influences of evil principles and conduct terminated with the individuals who first propagated them? Not to speak of former ages, has the influence of the Apostles of modern infidelity terminated? While the French language lives, their infidelity will flow through the literature they have poisoned; and while the English language continues to be spoken, through every part of the earth the infidelity of Hume and Gibbon, of Paine and Byron, will continue to corrupt the different classes of mankind who may converse with their writings. Well, then, there is "a fearful looking-for of judgment:" there is a solemn anticipation of the final account in those disembodied spirits that are now in the separate state. Already they know that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. There *is* wrath upon them now; but O, Sirs, there is wrath to come; wrath yet to come; uttermost wrath yet to come for ever! Truly, this is a fearful looking-for "of fiery indignation, that shall devour the adversaries." Thus, when our Lord was about to cast out the demons, we read, that they cried, "Jesus, thou son of David, what have we to do with thee? Art thou come to torment us *before our time*?" These fallen spirits seemed, therefore, to know that there was a time approaching when they shall be tormented beyond their present woes, and they anxiously inquired, whether their sufferings were to commence before the destined period of retribution had arrived.

These illustrations are, I trust, sufficient to show that departed spirits are cognizant of events connected with their future destiny: and, therefore, I will proceed to the last observation, and briefly consider, that THESE DEPARTED SPIRITS WILL BE UNITED TO THEIR BODIES AGAIN AT THE RESURRECTION, TO RECEIVE IN THEIR OWN PERSONS THEIR APPROPRIATE RECOMPENSE. It is not, of course, expected, that I should now enter upon the arguments in support of the doctrine of the resurrection; but I cannot omit it as a momentous part of the prospective destinies of all the dead. The resurrection of the body is an event in perfect agreement with the holiness and equity of Him who has ordained it. I say, first, *that it is equitable*. The body has had a large share in the good and evil that has been committed by all mankind. The bodies of the wicked have been employed in transgression; their members have been "instruments of unrighteousness," and those rebel members must suffer: the bodies of the good have been instruments for the glory of God, and those members must be rewarded. Those eyes that have wept over the sorrows of afflicted humanity must sparkle with the joys of immortal blessedness. Those hands that have laboured to mitigate human suffering must rest in the enjoyment of immortal blessedness. It is the design of the Saviour, that, if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him; and share with him in the glory as we have participated in the toil. If our bodies now are the temples of the Holy Ghost, those bodies are not to be left in the ruin of the tomb; but are to be re-edified and made glorious temples that shall abide for ever.

But, I must observe, that this is not only equitable, but, secondly, *it is also consistent*. You will find, in the New Testament, that the consummation of

happiness or woe is always made dependant on the resurrection. I will refer to a few instances. Our Lord said, "that he that believeth on me, I will raise him up at the last day." On another occasion he told his disciples, that when they did good, they should not be recompensed by the objects of their benevolence, but that he would "recompense them in the resurrection of the just." He described the scene of the last judgment, and told his hearers, that when his disciples shall all be gathered around his throne, he will say, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." What, had they not inherited the kingdom before? On the common and popular notion, that good people, at death, go immediately to heaven, how can we understand, "Come, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." On that hypothesis they had been in possession of it already, it may be for many, very many preceding centuries! But, on the other hand, if you believe that in heaven the re-united body and soul are to possess together the future inheritance, then it seems to me, that a harmonious sense is obtained, and a delightful anticipation enjoyed; an anticipation of progressive blessedness, rising from a lower to a higher degree, until our souls and bodies shall be filled with a felicity which our present state will not permit us to enjoy.

Thus have I attempted to discuss this interesting and obscure subject. I hope I have not indulged in unauthorized speculations, or in dogmatical assertions. We do not preach these things as matters of faith; but value them mainly as they solve many difficulties, and harmonize many passages of the Holy Scriptures, which, in my view, would otherwise appear discrepant, if not contradictory.

There be many that say, "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were. The first Christians thought the judgment was near, and now almost two thousand years have passed away, and no judgment has come; and, for aught we know, there are to intervene two thousand years more before the judgment shall be set: let us, then, eat, drink, and be merry." Ah, sirs, recollect that if the judgment-seat be thus distant from you, an immortal state of happiness or woe is very near. This night thy soul may be required of thee; this night, stripped of the body, which too often, like a veil, hides the light of immortal truth from the mind; your guilty spirit may stand naked before the holy presence of God. O, then, do not imagine that you can put off to a long distant day, and to a tribunal which may not be fixed for ages, the decision of your destinies. The pulsations of our hearts this night may cease, and our disembodied spirits may awake either in that state of blessedness or woe, where Lazarus, or Dives, found their appropriate abode. And let me especially impress this thought upon your minds, that nothing will prepare you for the paradise of joy, but friendship with God through Jesus Christ. "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," exclaimed the dying thief: and the expiring Saviour replied, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Let me entreat you, therefore, to cry to Him, not now hanging on his cross, but exalted on his throne, "Lord, remember me!" You need an interest in his atoning blood, his pardoning mercy, and his interceding grace: and if you thus cry to him, be assured that he is able to save to the uttermost, and that he will not cast you out: which God grant, for Christ's sake. Amen.

## THE INTERMEDIATE STATE OF THE DEPARTED SPIRITS.

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REV. J. LEIFCHILD,

CRAVEN CHAPEL, REGENT STREET, FEBRUARY 12, 1832.

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“ Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.”—LUKE, xxiii. 43.

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THESE words were spoken before the sun was darkened in the midst of day, or his beams withdrawn from this lower world: they were pronounced by the Lord Jesus Christ ere the veil of the temple was rent in the midst, and the earth trembled, and the rocks were rent, and the graves were opened, and the bodies of the saints came from their graves. But, yet the great company of people who followed him to his crucifixion, and the Roman soldiers, the pharisees and the scribes, were there. The chief priests and elders were present, and mocking him, said, “ He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.”

But your glorified Redeemer is now ascended to his Father's throne; and how deeply indebted to him ought we to feel, that to all this he returned *no* answer! None of these malignant attempts disturbed his holy purpose; for when he was “ led as a lamb to the slaughter, as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.” It is observable, that instead of replying to these revilers, he gives himself to prayer, to all prayer, and says, “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” He implores mercy, he supplicates heaven for them, and he prays for his murderers. Stephen, the proto-martyr, had also partaken of the same divine spirit; he asked humbly and fervently of heaven, for the forgiveness of his destroyers: “ Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”

But did all who were spectators and agents in Calvary's scenes, mock and deride the dying Saviour? O no! there were some who knew the great atonement was now being made, that the great sacrifice was now being offered. Witness the conviction evinced by the earnest supplication of the thief upon the cross, “ Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.” How did he apply those words, “ when thou comest into *thy* kingdom?” In the full assurance of faith, feeling convinced of the divinity and glory of the Saviour he addressed. The spirit of grace is here seen in the suppliant's prayer, and in the unbounded liberality of the Saviour. Verily, if prayer is at any time of eminent importance, it must have been so when under these peculiar circumstances. This reply of the Lord Jesus to the prayer of the expiring thief, shews, not only that his sins were pardoned, but evinces the sincerity of his

prayer, the state of his awakened mind at that trying hour, and the unbounded liberality of Christ.

Before we come to consider the state of the departed soul, we are to take some notice of the character of Jesus Christ. Observe, then, his greatness and majesty.

Behold him in his *greatness*. The Jews' idea of paradise was, that it was a place of felicity, a garden of delight; they meant, therefore, a place of happiness. Our Lord took up this idea in speaking to the man on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise:" he therefore meant to say, "To-day thou shalt have a place of happiness with me." But what liberality and greatness is here shewn! When Esther went to King Ahasuerus, he said, "Ask what you will and it shall be done, even unto the half of my kingdom." It was a large kingdom, there were one hundred and twenty-seven provinces in it; but what was *this* when compared to the paradise of the kingdom of heaven! The promise of the Lord extended to *more* than the suppliant had requested: he asks only for *remembrance*; Christ gives him unbounded *happiness* in eternity. What he asks is apparently insignificant, compared with what was bestowed. As though the suffering Immanuel had said, "Remember thee? I will, I will remember thee, for thou art given to me of my Father to be redeemed by me; I am shedding my blood for thy atonement, and thy salvation, and on my hand and heart thy name is engraven: if my spirit be in thee, thou art the heir of my glory, the joint heir of my happiness to all eternity. I shall be happy, and thou shalt be happy too; thou hast suffered, and thou shalt reign with me; as thou hast confessed me before men, I will confess thee before my Father and the holy angels. I will carry thee into eternal glory as the proof of my atonement; as the pledge of my grace, I will carry thee into the paradise of my God." What liberality, what magnanimity, to dispose of a place in paradise under such circumstances! When Pilate saw Jesus Christ standing before him as a culprit, and heard him call himself a King, he said unto him, "Art thou a King? *thou!* with a tawdry robe thrown over thy shoulders, thy face besmeared with blood, and with that circlet of thorns upon thy brows, and that feeble reed in thy hand. Art thou a King?" The Saviour replied, "I am a King: my kingdom is not of this world." And here he shewed the same spirit as he ever manifested. In the hour of darkness and trial, when the enemy is seeking to gain the advantage against them, he will appear to his saints, as he did in the days of his suffering to the thief, saying, "Though nailed to the cross, and pouring out my soul unto death to redeem a world, yet I am the Lord of life and glory; I can give paradise, I can bestow eternal happiness: thou shalt enjoy with me the kingdom; this day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Here is consistency; every thing in keeping; every act harmonizing in just propriety: the very nature of Christ's power and attributes are such as to enable him to give pardoning mercy to his people. He stands before the judgment-seat of man; he is tortured; he is put to the rack; yet he retracts not a single word, he retains his firmness to the last! And if the truth of the religion of Christ had not been shewn in any other way, it was fully manifested by the circumstances attending the crucifixion, which caused the Centurion and those who were with him to fear greatly, and to acknowledge, that truly this was the Son of God.

Behold in this conduct of Jesus Christ his *kindness, compassion, and ready*

*attention to prayer.* He will not suffer his saints to be injured by the clamours of the powers of darkness. In the midst of trouble the voice of supplication is heard, the voice of prayer is heard; in the moment of dire affliction his gracious answer is obtained. "Lord, remember me when thou comest to thy kingdom." The suffering Immanuel instantly turns to the man, opens his ear to the request, allows kindness to enter his breast, and says, "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." And still my brethren, he is merciful to the sufferer's prayer, still his compassion and pity are manifest. To those who blaspheme his name he pays no particular attention: he allows them a space for repentance: he gives them opportunity to consider their state, if haply they will turn from their ways of sin: he invites them to a full investigation of the reality of the Gospel, and waits for a time that they may turn and come with the language of prayer before him. But to the suffering penitent he turns an attentive ear: he hears the groans of the contrite heart; he turns and hears the petitions of his people; he says to all his disciples, "Let me hear your voices; I love to listen thereto; for they are full of prayer and praise."

Mark the circumstances under which the petition under consideration is answered. He is now dying in agony; he is making expiation for the sins of the people; he is pouring out his soul unto death; all the promises of his suffering are now being fulfilled; he is bearing human malice and hellish wrath as our surety; and so he has every thing to absorb his attention. Yet, in the midst of these overwhelming circumstances, he breaks through all of them to attend to the voice of prayer! When we are in certain circumstances we are apt to think our attention should be engrossed wholly by them, and confined to ourselves. We are willing to allow this concentration of attention to every deeply wounded and distressed mind; but at the very time when the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ were most acute, he sympathizes with this poor man in his sufferings and gives him relief. And as his intense and inconceivable suffering did not make him forget the humble, contrite penitent, so do not his honours; for he has the same sympathy for us, now that he is ascended into heaven: he is a merciful and faithful High Priest, and has the same love and compassion for all his people. Yes, his sympathy is the same as in the days of his flesh; Christ in heaven is the same benign character as Christ on earth. His love was shewn to be the same when after his ascension he appeared to Saul of Tarsus. When this young man was going forth commissioned by the enemies of the church to persecute them, he kept his people from persecution by stopping the progress and changing the heart of the persecutor. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" This will serve to shew the certain bearings of his mercy towards man. Christ came to shew mercy to men; he came to turn man from sin—to attest his Gospel—to test the faith of his people, to try the validity of their repentance, and to bring them with all humility to the cross, and there to confer upon them a title to everlasting happiness.

Notice the treatment he adopted to obtain this. His treatment to the thief on the cross was marked with an amplitude of compassion. He might have said, "Remember *thee*, who hast been all thy life living in open transgression, with a soul deeply stained with pollution, thy conscience also seared and hardened, and obdurate! *Now*, that you are come to the last extremity am I to take you to my remembrance—am I to suffer you to dwell with me for

ever!" Why the man could hardly hope to succeed at first; he could only expect a rebuke at first. But does he get a repulse? No! Jesus Christ knew there was no time to lose—he makes no unnecessary delay; no sooner does the suppliant say, "Lord, remember me," than the dying Saviour responds "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." O it was a gracious declaration to the expiring supplicant—it was impossible not to feel grateful for these animating words! Who can doubt Christ's willingness to save? Who can doubt his attention to prayer? In all your difficulties, in the time of your sufferings and the period of your anguish, then come to Christ, and say, "Lord, remember me."

We now come to the discussion of the state of the departed soul. "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Some learned men say, these words should be drawn to a point of time, that they refer to the time of making the promise, "Verily I say unto thee *to-day*." Now, *this very day*, thou shalt henceforth be in paradise with me. Those who make this objection have an hypothesis of their own, which is necessary to be repeated: it is, that the soul of man is dead, and will be so from the death of the body until the time of the resurrection: they have also a previous hypothesis, which is, that the soul of Christ from the time of his death upon the cross until his resurrection was in a slumbering state; and of course this is intended to lead to the conclusion, that every other soul is in the same condition. These men (and among them is Dr. Priestley) have gone on denying the existence of angels as conscious beings; and have affirmed all that is said about them in the Scriptures to be merely strong *personifications*. To support the hypothesis of the slumber of the soul, these arguments are used:—The soul's dependence on the body is owing to *organization*; therefore the extent of the bodily powers involves the extent of the powers of the soul. They say the morning of the resurrection is the period of the soul's *awakening*. They assert that in all the period that elapses there is an *unconsciousness* of the soul; as men in *long trances* are not sensible of life, or the lapse of time that intervened while they were asleep, so the soul will not in the hour of the resurrection be sensible of the lapse of time that has passed between. Hence they say, the Apostle might well be accounted consistent when he said, "absent from the body, but present with the Lord:" for though there was a suspension of thousands of years, yet the soul being unconscious of the existence of itself during this long lapse of time, upon its awaking in the morning of the resurrection it would appear just to have passed from the earth, and got to glory; and that the soul at the time of its thus passing is sensible of its passing, and enjoys the full contemplation of its own ideas: upon this assertion the theory is founded.

Now can it be supposed that the apostles used equivocations when they spoke of the happiness of the soul, and when they speak of the sensibility of the soul at the time of its separation from the body; when they directly assert that the soul *immediately* goes into the presence of its Giver? It is not likely, if this theory had been true, that they would have withheld this reservation when speaking directly of the departure of the soul from the body. With regard to the notion itself, it is incompatible with all the positive declarations of Scripture, and all the reasonings of analogy. It is essential to the mind that it actually exists and thinks. A soul cannot exist without thought; a

living soul without thought and consciousness is impossible. As for the soul being left in the full operation of its powers or in enlarged vision when separated from this mortality, we believe this to be so, although we know not the extent of these powers. We know, however, that the soul must be vivid, and that when the body slumbers in the grave the soul is vivid. And this is confirmed by the appearances of the powers of the mind, which are concentrated as it were just at the period of its separation from the body. We often find that after long sickness the operations of the soul are more vivid, clear, and powerful, than they have ever been before; and this appears frequently just at the moment the body is dropping into the tomb. Why then should the soul sleep with the body, when, instead of declining, it is thus gaining strength? As far as philosophy can go it does in favour of the Scriptural doctrine. We find that in every period of time, the heathen philosophers have held the notion of disembodied spirits: so that the notion of the slumbering of the soul is against all the notions of philosophy.

But not only so, we observe again, this notion is unscriptural. Methinks, I hear some one inquire, "Sir, how can it be inconsistent with Scripture?" The Scripture saith, the body goeth down, and the spirit goeth up. The word of divine inspiration declares, that "the body shall return to the dust, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." Hear what the Scripture says: "God is not the God of the dead but of the living." God calleth himself "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," long after their death *naturally*; therefore their spirits are in conscious existence; they therefore at that time, when these Scriptures were penned, must have been with God, which is precisely the time of the unconsciousness of the soul, or of that state in which there is a slumbering of the intellectual principle, as you say of the spirit. And as this is the case, we have given us another reply to serve instead of argument, namely, that it is altogether a question of mythology; and they endeavour to shew that there may be also much weight in the objection they raise as to the correctness of our Greek translations. But Dr. Campbell has satisfactorily shewn that the full compass of the idioms of the Greek language are more destructive of the principle attempted to be laid down than our translation is, therefore the basis upon which this notion of the slumbering of the soul is founded, gives a greater strength (if it was necessary) to this blessed and important hope. Look at the state of the departed soul of man between the day of the body's dissolution, and resurrection; for this is a problem to which the death of our Lord Jesus Christ and his resurrection has given rise. The state of the soul during this interval is called an "intermediate state." If by this expression it is intended to signify, that the soul has a conscious existence between the period of the death of the body and its resurrection; then it would be true, since there is such an intermediate state: but if referring to the condition of the spirit in that period as being in a quiescent, slumbering, state, or as being neither in heaven or in hell, but in a condition that is between both these states, then I think it is easy to shew there is no such intermediate state at all.

Three opinions have been held relative to the abode of the soul between the day of death and that of judgment. The first is, that the souls of all men that have died go to some place not appointed for rewards or punishments, but merely for a residence, where they are to wait till the morning of the resurrec



tion. The second is, that the souls of good men at death, do not immediately go into a state of happiness and of glory; but still that they go into a different place from the souls of the wicked; and the souls of the latter do not go immediately into a state of misery, but await the day of final retribution for their doom. The other is that the souls of good men as soon as they leave this world, stand before the bar of God; and immediately pass to a state of happiness, while the souls of the wicked are instantly consigned to a state of misery.

With respect to the first of these opinions, that the souls of all men, both righteous and wicked go at the time of death to some one appointed place, there to remain until the morning of the resurrection, we might argue, how can righteous and unrighteous spirits subsist in harmony together? or how is this opinion to be reconciled with some Scriptural expressions, as "Gather not my life with sinners, nor my soul with bloody men." "But thou, O Lord, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days, but I will trust in thee." This opinion has arisen from one Scripture in the Old Testament, and one in the New. In the sixteenth Psalm, "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope; for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." This passage is commented upon by the Apostle Peter in his sublime discourse contained in the second chapter of Acts, wherein he shews the Psalmist spoke concerning Jesus in this passage, which is again quoted and enlarged upon by him, "Therefore being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh he would raise up Christ to sit upon his throne; he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption." The term here translated "hell" is in the original language, "*Hades*," which signifies "the unknown place." And thus, by virtue of these texts, the souls of all are said (by those who hold this opinion) to go to "*Hades*" or "the unknown world." But many men have thought that though this is the primary sense of the expression, "the unknown world," yet that it also signifies different meanings, being synonymous with many other words in scripture. Thus we read in the book of Job, "hell," or *hades*, "is before him, and destruction hath no covering." Thus our Lord Jesus Christ says, "Lazarus died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom; the rich man also died, and in hell (*hades*) he lifted up his eyes being in torment." We find these texts corresponding with others, and if any man say there is no such thing as a correspondence between these synonymous expressions, we invite him to a critical examination of the various passages bearing upon the point under consideration.

The next opinion is that the souls of good men at death do *not* immediately go into a state of happiness, although they go into a different place from the souls of the wicked; that the souls of the good go into a state of probation, but that they did not do so until after the resurrection of Christ. This seems to have been the opinion of many men: and the only reason for entertaining it, is found in Heb. xi. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off." And again, "And these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." But if the sense they contend for is contained in these passages

then they would prove too much—they would prove more than they wish: but such is not the effect of these words as relating to the final happiness of the soul at the last day: for when the apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, says, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,” he adds, “henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.” This *day* refers to the time when the victors who had gained crowns at the Olympic games assembled for the purpose of receiving them; they did not receive the prize when they had just arrived at the goal, but upon a day set apart for that purpose. So the apostle means here to say, there shall be a day, and that shall be the last day, when all the saints shall be made completely happy; on that day their bliss shall be consummated, and they shall not be perfectly happy before. But that the Old Testament saints did go *immediately* into another state after death is very clear. “Save me, O God, from them that trouble me:” “As for me I shall be satisfied when I awake after thy likeness.” Christ promised the thief upon the cross “This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” He was to be with him that very day; this promise was made *before* the Saviour died, and was therefore fulfilled *before* his resurrection. It is said of the ancient Israelites, that when they died they were “gathered to their fathers,” and to “their people.” This does not mean that they were buried in the *same* place; for that is not true. Abraham was buried in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron, the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; and not in Ur of the Chaldees, where Issac was buried. Also it refers not at all to their bodies but to the souls of these good men, who were gathered with the rest of the righteous dead, and their souls were gathered to their own place.

It is, therefore, true, that men at the end of life go into a state of happiness or misery *before* the final day of retribution. “But,” (says the apostle) “ye are come to mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.” This was the state to which the Saviour went from the cross; it is said, “he descended into hell,” that is, not into a place of torment according to our sense of the term hell, but into *hades*, the unknown place. Indeed the word here translated, “hell,” does not mean a place of torment in the original signification, it means the unknown world, referring to one or other of its states. Our translators had this idea themselves; and in rendering the word *hades* by the term “hell,” they never meant to say, the Scriptures intended a place of torment, but that he went to paradise, the abode of his Father, as he said unto his disciples, “A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.” “Three days ye shall not see me; and where shall I be? I go to my Father.” And when on the cross he cried unto the penitent convert by his side, “This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. I will take thee by my side to my Father.”

This was the state the apostle Paul was permitted to behold, when he was caught up into the third heaven, or to *paradise*, when he was “absent from

the body, and present with the Lord." And this is the state of the Christian directly after death. What this state is, or where it is; whether it is on this earth, or beyond the limits of our system, I cannot tell: since God never meant it to be known, therefore he describes it by this word, "Hades." We know, however, that this is the place of happiness; that the spirits of the just are there; that it is a delightful state; that devout exercises are there; and that there exists, in all its fulness, a joyful hope of the great salvation at the last day. But their happiness is not complete, and they are not fully in possession of the fruition of joy, till their purified bodies are again united to their souls; nor is the earth that in which the people are to dwell for ever: for we, according to the promise, look for a new Jerusalem—we look for a new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; and this promise shall be performed, and in this the saints shall dwell: and though I say it is not *the* heaven, it is *a* heaven, where the saints shall dwell, for Christ shall be there; and where he is, it must be heaven; and there faith shall be in constant exercise, and hope and joy constantly known. There the saints are full of joy and glorious hope, waiting for the general doom, when the archangel's trumpet shall sound, and they shall rise again to judge the world.

How slender is the tie to bliss which every man possesses; he is always as near to Paradise as to the door of death! How short was this man's journey to heaven! View the thief upon the cross, and hear the declaration, "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise!" This was about the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the afternoon, and the Jewish day ended at six o'clock, so that only one short afternoon was to intervene, and he was to be there—the moment after death he was to be in Paradise.

"One gentle sigh the spirit gives,  
Quick is the way, and short the road;  
We scarcely know that he is gone;  
He shuts his eyes and sees his God."

How should the thought of this make us feel resigned, when our Christian friends are going from us, when they are summoned hence. It is not going from one company of sinners to another; it is not going from one abode of sorrow and care to another; but it is going from earth to heaven. We are then to turn our backs upon all we know and love below; but that is more than compensated by the knowledge that we are terminating our troubles, and about to partake of eternal joys—that we are going to enjoy the presence of our God, and the society of the saints in glory. How should this thought diminish our regret for our friends who are gone before! The more we love them, the more should we wish for their departure. And how might our dying pious friends, with justice chide us, as we stand weeping round their dying beds; how might their spirits rebuke our sorrow, as we bedew their tombs with our tears! How might they say, "As the Lord Jesus Christ died for me, and loved me, you should rejoice; because I am going to my Father; because I am exchanging earth for heaven; sin and sorrow for joy and eternal glory."

But what a contrast with this is the state of the wicked! "I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Write, blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours." But if you are not in

the Lord, which is by the operation of the Holy Ghost, effecting faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, you cannot be in a blessed state: but the moment after death you will be in misery, and be certain of your doom. There will be nothing then for you but a fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which is to consume you throughout a long eternity! How near are some believers to their home! Jesus Christ may even now be calling some of you to his arms. Death may even now be commissioned to summon some of you to Paradise! The sinners too, how near may they be to doom! Satan may be saying, to-night, respecting some, "To-morrow you shall be with me, not in Paradise, but in an introductory hell; there you must be with me, until the day of final retribution, when you shall sink to eternal perdition, to rise no more for ever!"

I would fain hope that the consideration of the subject of this night, has made it clear to your understanding, that the whole authority of Scripture goes to shew, that all Christians, all sincere followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, go *immediately* after death to heaven; and that sinners, upon leaving this world, go into a state of torment. If you are not saved, and die to-night, you will assuredly be lost for ever. Go and seek the Lord this night: read his blessed Word; pray that he will give you repentance unto life, and faith unto salvation: so shall you be rewarded with a crown of life, and become meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Delay not, O delay not this important duty! Implore salvation, make use of the space now given you to repent; this hour may be your last: on this very moment, to some of you, may salvation depend; on this very moment may hang eternity. Amen.

## THE STEADFASTNESS OF THE COUNSEL OF THE LORD.

REV. J. HASLEGREAVE, A.M.

ST. PETER'S CHURCH, ISLINGTON, FEBRUARY 7, 1836.

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"There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."—PROVERBS, xix. 21.

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"WERE this world," as Jeremy Taylor strikingly exhibits in his "Reasonings with Atheists," "Were this world to be but a chance world, every thing connected with it to be simply the result of mere chance and accident, then truly indeed would the case of many of its inhabitants, nay, most of its inhabitants, be deplorable; and especially of all men would those who have a hope of hereafter be truly most miserable, because, as experience has taught us, they have not had any portion in this life; virtue has generally been depressed, while vice has as often reigned." But "the Lord reigneth" is the consolation of all his faithful servants; and however dark and foreboding may be the times in which we live, and however varied the trials we are called personally to endure, and however severe may be the afflictions through which the church of Christ may be called to pass, "the Lord reigneth, be the people never so impatient; he sitteth between the cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet." The world is continued but for the full and final accomplishment of the one grand subject of prophecy: the world is created for the habitation of another order of beings, whom God in his wisdom has called, and redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, to be spared by the long-suffering and forbearance of God: and though it continues a wandering and rebellious planet, telling to others around the fearfulness of disobedience against their Creator, still is it spared for the mightiest transaction that can take place in the universe of God, in order that God may gain to himself a rich revenue of praise and glory, in its full, final, and perfect restoration to Him whose right it is to reign.

However, therefore, my brethren, at times our faith is darkened, and our fears are within that all is against us, yet this is the truth, though "there are many devices in a man's heart," though there be varied evil in their design and tendency, "nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

It will be my endeavour, then, relying upon the divine blessing, simply to illustrate the position of our text, in the first place, by recurring to a few past events; and, in the next place, to state the ground on which we rest perfectly assured, that, however many and evil may be the designs and devices in man's heart, the "counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

The difficulty is in the selection of INSTANCES. If we read the history of the world, or if we turn to the sacred page of divine inspiration, so many and so striking are the illustrations of the truth of our text, that it is difficult to know which to select, where to begin, or where to end. I shall endeavour, however, to fix your attention on a few of the more prominent ones, and in doing so, the case of God's ancient people, in the midst of their tyranny and oppression in the land of bondage, naturally strikes our attention. God had purposed and declared, four hundred and thirty years before he accomplished his purpose, that he would give to a people whom he would choose, even the descendants of his faithful servant and friend, Abraham, the possession of a land flowing with milk and honey: but in the meantime they had to sojourn in a land of captivity, where their oppressors would cruelly ill-treat them. But God in due time, in his own way, in the moment fixed on in his own eternal counsels, would deliver them with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm. Behold the wondrous counsel of God, then brought to bear! We see, indeed, the many devices that existed in men's hearts. Though God hath planned all his purposes, though his counsel is but one, and the devices of man's heart are many, yet still man is a free moral agent; he doeth according to the devices of his own mind. But God, in his infinite wisdom, and by the exercise of his omniscience and his power, so overrules and controls all the devices and schemes of man, as simply to bring about his own blessed purposes of love to his people.

And here we find that, when the descendants of Joseph began to multiply, there was fear in the heart of a king that arose and knew not Joseph. What does he do? He thinks how he might best stop the progress of the people whom he fears; he says, "Let us deal wisely with them." Hear his devices! He increases their burthens; he makes their life bitter with the bondage wherewith they are oppressed. But God hears their cry from heaven, his dwelling-place; and there is another miraculous interference on the part of God. Pharaoh gives his command that their burthens should be made heavier; Pharaoh says, in the devices of his own heart, "Still we will deal wisely with them;" and therefore, he gives a positive command that the first-born of the males of those whom he oppressed should be cut off. Mark, my brethren, how singularly the device of the proud tyrant is defeated! Contrary to his mandate, there was a little lovely child, that excited pity and compassion in those who had received the order to destroy it: they could not bear to take away its life; and therefore, fearing, at the same time, the consequences of the disobedience of the king's command, they placed the little babe in a basket, and exposed it on the water. It is just here that the overruling providence of the great God comes in; and just for the accomplishment of his own purposes the child is taken by Pharaoh's daughter, who saw its lovely appearance, and felt for it, and took it home and educated it as her own son; and it was by that very child, thus signally preserved, that God intended to accomplish his own purposes, and thereby to defeat the devices which had been in the mind of the tyrant Pharaoh.

Need we trace this further, my brethren? Need I remind you of the singularly wonderful steps by which that deliverance was wrought—how Pharaoh devised against God, and God overruled all his devices; until at last the proud tyrant, casting off every yoke and defying the Omnipotent, went forth

in the pride and haughtiness of his mind, with his chariots and horsemen, pursuing the poor fugitives, expecting that he would overtake them—the sea before them and their enemies behind—and there it was that the Lord interfered for the perfect accomplishment of his purposes: “He caused the Red Sea to give way to his people, and his people to pass over as upon dry land, while their enemies that pursued them, they sank as lead in the mighty waters.” Thus were the poor oppressed Israelites freed from their captivity, and delivered with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm; and standing on the other shore, they might mark the fulfilment of our text, “There are many devices in a man’s heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.”

Need I go further in the Old Testament history, my brethren, in the illustration of this striking truth? I would remind you of the case (because it is a most striking one, and because God hath spoken so expressly on the subject as it bears strikingly on our text), the case of the proud Assyrian king, who came up against Jerusalem in all the pride of his heart, determining to lay it waste and to bring the Jews captive, and make them tributary to him. He had no idea whatsoever but of the accomplishment of his own wicked devices: he had gone on conquering, and subdued nations great and mighty: he was the monarch of the then world, and he feared no power that could withstand him. But observe, that though his devices were such, when he came before the gates of Jerusalem, when he marched his proud army in array against them, thinking that the poor helpless inhabitants could not stand before him, then God interposed, frustrated the desires of man, and made the diviners mad, and turned their counsel into folly. An unseen visitation fell on one of the finest armies that perhaps ever came up against a city to destroy it. There came down an angel of the Lord, in the dead of midnight, and destroyed an hundred and eighty-five thousand of the very best of his army. Thus God turned him back by a way that he came not, put his hook in his nose, and sent him, and the army under his command, away from the accomplishment of his devices.

Hear, my brethren, how God hath spoken on this very subject. Speaking of him, he says, “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit”—observe the language—“he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings? Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?” Here you listen to the proud language of the Assyrian tyrant. He had no conception whatever of any thing but the accomplishment of the devices of his own heart. God, however, declares the truth; and be it known to you all, for the Lord God declares it, he used this Assyrian as an instrument in his hand to punish his own people for their hypocritical conduct, their transgressions, and their sins. And this is the real reason; whensoever wicked people, designing men, are raised up among us, who seek to ruin and destroy all that is lovely and fair, we ought to trace

it back to the first cause, and ask, "Has not God a controversy with us; and is it not that they are permitted to go such lengths for the punishment of his people, and as instruments for the accomplishment of his purposes of love?" Here, therefore, again, in the case of the proud Assyrian monarch, we find the language of our text borne out in truth to the letter: "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

I pass on to another striking illustration of the same truth. When the measure of the iniquity of the Jews was accomplished, God determined to carry them captive into Babylon, where they were to sojourn the predicted period of their captivity, in order to be taught that the Lord is God, holy and gracious is he. And mark, my brethren, when the period of their captivity terminated, God, in the accomplishment of his own purposes, intended to bring them back to their own land; because, had the ten tribes never returned to their own land, what would have become of all the designs of God in the salvation of the world, and its wonderful accomplishment on Calvary? It was, therefore, necessary that they should return, in order that the whole of the purposes of God should be accomplished, and his whole word have to the very letter all its truth verified. God, therefore, intended this. How was it brought about? In a most singular way. One monarchy was broken by another monarchy, and there was raised up a prince, Cyrus by name, whom God had spoken of two hundred years before, precisely with the qualifications and talents, that mild and amiable character, and that extensive knowledge of human nature, that was to fit him, in the hand of God, as an instrument to bid his people return from their captivity, and go back to the land given to their forefathers, where they were to remain until the coming of the Prince of Peace. Here again, therefore, brethren, we are compelled to stand, and admire, and adore, and see how our text has been verified to the letter, that though "there are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

I come now, in further illustration of this truth, to a scene the most wondrous, as it was the most glorious, that had ever, or could ever, be seen in the universe of God. You will at once have your minds directed to the crucifixion of the Lord of life and glory. God, in the moment of man's transgression, gave a promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. He had continued the world in being for four thousand years simply for the accomplishment of his purposes. The Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman monarchies had successively arisen and destroyed each other: all to make way for that monarchy which should never end; even His whose was the government, and the power, and the dominion, and the greatness. And, my brethren, mark how wondrously the whole was brought about. Even at the birth of our Immanuel Jesus, Herod had devices in his heart, for he sought to destroy the young child, fearing the safety of his own throne. And how did God interpose, in the most singular and striking way, to prevent that? Not until the very moment had arrived, fixed in the counsels of the great Eternal, when the sun should withdraw itself from the scene, and the very earth should be convulsed at the sight—not till the moment came, when Jesus was to hang, the expiring victim, and say, "It is finished," was any device permitted to prosper that was against him: but when that moment came, then were the



devices, and the wicked intentions of designing men, permitted to be accomplished to their hearts' intent and desire.

Hear how God himself hath spoken concerning this: "Of a truth Lord against the holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before be done." Here is the simple truth, my brethren. they were permitted to prosper; all the evil machinations of those evil men were permitted to have their full accomplishment; but it was simply the accomplishment of "the counsel of the Lord, that should stand." In eternity, my brethren, we shall look back on all secondary causes as under the influence and direction of the great First Cause: we shall be lost in wonder and admiration of that power which could accomplish, that wisdom that could devise, and that love that could bring about such things, to the praise and glory of his holy name.

I would instance one other fact, illustrative of the position of our text. At Christ's resurrection, you all remember how many devices existed in the minds of his enemies. They feared (and well they might, had they not seen nature tremble at the death of her Creator?) they feared that he might have the power he had spoken of; they feared the accomplishment of his own word, that he would rise again the third day. And, therefore, mark their devices! In their hearts they thought to secure him as well as they could secure a lifeless corpse. He must be put into a rock; there must be a large stone rolled to the door; there must be the royal signet appended thereto. That is not enough; there must be a guard of soldiers appointed to watch the sepulchre. Appointed to watch what? A poor, lifeless, inanimate corpse, to prevent its being taken away! See the devices and desires of these men's hearts. But lo, the morning came: the purpose of God shall stand in spite of all the devices that are in men's hearts. An angel came down and rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and the guard fell back terrified. Here, again, have we a striking confirmation of the position of our text, "There are many devices in a man's heart: nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

If time permitted, we might trace onward, from that moment to the present, in the history of the church of Christ, confirmation of the same precious truth. I might remind you of the case of the apostate emperor Julian, who thought he could frustrate the purposes of God, by preventing the prophecies of God from receiving their accomplishment; by destroying all those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus. His very letters, written and signed with his own royal hand, usually closed with the expression, "Crush the wretch!" If it had been possible for Satanic malice, and the devices of men's hearts, to have crushed the religion of Jesus and his people, it would have been accomplished by Julian. But mark, on one of the occasions that he went forth to "crush the wretch," he was compelled to confess that Jesus was Lord of lords, and King of kings; and to admit, in so many words, "there are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand;" for he received a mortal wound, and the blood flew out, and he cried out, looking up to him whom he had called "the wretch," "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!"

Thus, brethren, throughout the whole history of the Church of Christ, in all its martyrs and confessors, who have waded through their own blood to the crown of immortal glory, when the existence of the church could scarcely be discovered,

except when you traced her track with blood, and could only perceive her existence by the fires which were lighted up for the consuming of her followers, still this same precious truth has always been evident, that though "there are many devices in a man's heart; that nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

I pass on to state briefly, THE GROUND ON WHICH WE REST ASSURED OF THIS. And this ground is, on the character and perfections of God, which are all pledged to see this "counsel of the Lord" carried into accomplishment. The sovereignty of God, the wisdom of God, and the eternity of God, these are the attributes that must of necessity see to the accomplishment of his counsel, and the overthrowing the devices of man's heart when opposed to his counsel. I have not time to pass through these attributes of Deity, as affording us ground of hope, that "Though there are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." I will leave them to your own meditations. If God be the Sovereign of the world, who then can defeat his purpose? If he be infinite in power, what can prevent the accomplishment of his counsel? If God be the God of wisdom, there can be no mistake in the laying down of that counsel, nor can any thing possibly arise in after time that can interfere with the accomplishment of it. And here you see that the attributes of Deity go to assure us, on a ground of firm unshaken confidence, that "the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

We come, then, practically to apply our subject. And here, brethren, let us all learn submissively to adore the truly wise dispensations of our God. If we were left to ourselves we should infer, that it would be far better that truth should triumph and error be defeated, that virtue should be exalted and vice be depressed, that Satan should not continue to exercise the power which he does, that the moment should quickly arrive when the kingdom of the Lord shall be universally set up in every heart. It is natural for us thus to think; but, brethren, our ways are not as God's ways, our thoughts are not as God's thoughts. We may wonder why it is so and so at the present; we may wonder why the church has had to undergo so many severe persecutions: but we cease to wonder when we remember, that God is accomplishing all his own gracious plans and purposes; and that he will gain a rich revenue of praise, to his own grace and glory, in thus permitting for a time the ungodly to triumph, while truth seems to be defeated.

I will simply refer you again to the case of Pharaoh. Did not God get himself honour in the destruction of Pharaoh, more than he would if Pharaoh had simply obeyed the command in the first instance? God shewed his power and the protection which he could afford to his people, and how, in spite of every device, his counsel should stand. So again it was in the case of the three triumphant heroes in the burning fiery furnace. God, by permitting the proud tyrant to go that length, and cast them into the fire, thereby proved the power of his grace which could support them, and the omnipotence of his arm that could bear them up. And so, brethren, all the persecutions that the church has undergone, have tended to illustrate the grace of Jehovah, the power of his arm, and the mercy and long-suffering of his bosom. In eternity, when we shall see things clearly as they are, perhaps this will be one of the wondrous

lessons which shall be learned by us, and of which the more we learn, the more we shall adore.

And then let us learn, in every thing, as it respects ourselves or the church of Christ at large, this important lesson, to "be careful for nothing; but in every thing with prayer and thanksgiving let our requests be made known unto God." He will work, and who can stay his hand? O let us seek to be in the way of duty; to be doing what is clearly to the glory of God, and the well-being of our fellow-creatures: and then let us take joyfully whatsoever it may please him to lay upon us, assured that the time shall come, when, like gold purified in the fire, we shall come forth to the praise and glory of his grace. And then, dear brethren, for your consolation remember his precious promise, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." "All things," it matters not what—adversity as well as prosperity, persecution as well as success, the frown of the world as well as the smile of our friends: even the severest of all trials as well as the richest of all blessings, *all* shall "work together" and be active in the accomplishment of this one purpose, for "the good of them that love God."

And surely, brethren, all is hastening onward to the accomplishment of this object. Here is the Christian's foundation of hope, and here he can find a resting-place when the billows beat furiously against him; and he can rest assured that God will bring about the one purpose of his Saviour and his God. Even before the coming of Christ what were all the conflicts of the four great monarchies, the breaking them into smaller kingdoms, the setting up one kingdom and destroying another? And now that redemption is accomplished, what do kingdoms exist for? Even to gather God's people into that kingdom which shall never pass away, to the new heavens and the new earth wherein shall dwell righteousness; when there shall be one Lord and his name one, and when "the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." Good Lord, hasten it in thine own time!

THE INVITATION OF CHRIST.

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REV. M. O'SULLIVAN, A.M.

ST. MARK'S CHURCH, PENTONVILLE, FEBRUARY 14, 1836.

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"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."  
 MATTHEW, xi. 28.

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OUR blessed Saviour, in these words, addresses an invitation as comprehensive as is the extent of mankind: and yet, in every congregation where men assemble together, there shall be found some who do not believe as if the invitation were addressed to them. There are some before whom the paths of pleasure are yet green: expectation within their heart has not yet learned to doubt, or affection to distrust: and as they look forward from a circle of kind friends to a world with whose good things Providence has blessed them, the hopes and feelings of youth fling a light upon it, which relieves the gloom of all its darker rays, and sheds over its more engaging features a halo of magic attraction.

Were we to follow the wisdom of experience—were we to draw from the words of unquestionable authority, and tell them that man is made to mourn; that, however high their hopes may be, disappointment will overtake them; we should appear to such hearers as uttering the dictates of a distempered imagination, and giving vent to the gloomy suggestions of a splenetic mind. And yet it is too true, that even they, however high their expectation may be, shall soon become acquainted with the great truth, that they are not exempt from the ordinary lot of mortality; that they, whatever their hopes may be, whatever their condition may be, must expect that sorrow shall visit them. We know that the time shall come, and comes to all, when all are made sensible of this condition; when darkness has fallen upon the vision of youth, when its hopes have fled, and its kindest feelings are extinguished. To such a state all must come; and for such a state, the gradual abatement of youthful ardour seems to be preparing all. But many a time calamity anticipates the office of age; and even while youth remains with all this keen intensity of feeling, the day of suffering has commenced, and the young heart has been compelled to mourn over the friends, over the hopes, over the enjoyments, that constituted the rich charm of existence. And many a time, too, while much remains to be enjoyed in life, some one sorrow has taken up its residence within the heart; and although the world may look fair around, it cannot soothe that heart which knoweth its own bitterness; it pines like a cankered rose whose freshness withers, and whose beauty dies, even while it is yet bathed in heaven's dews, and blessed with heaven's sunshine.

But you may say to me, that it is quite unnecessary to give proofs that man

is made to mourn. You may tell me, this is all idle declamation, that you cannot reflect upon the years of your past life—that you cannot run over in memory the lives, and fortunes, and disappointments of your friends; that you cannot go forth into any crowded way of public resort, and read the countenance of those who pass you by without bringing home to your hearts and to your reflections the conviction, that man is made to mourn. You cannot think upon the conditions of life—upon the young, conflicting with passions, and temptations, and difficulties—upon the aged, bowed down under an accumulated load of sorrow, which nature puts upon them, or which memory has hoarded—upon the wealthy, mourning over the ruin of ambitious expectations—upon the poor, pining amid the sorrows of indigence—without feeling within your heart the echo of the wise man's declaration, that man is born to affliction as the sparks fly upward.

And why is this? How comes it, that in a world created and sustained and governed by an almighty Ruler, there shall be many whose days are numbered out in affliction, and none whose lives are not chequered by sorrow? Where shall we seek the cause of evil so extensive? Is it that the great Being who made us is indifferent to our afflictions, or derives a gratification from our sorrows? Or shall we not rather look into our own hearts, and discover there tastes so depraved, inclinations so evil, as instruct us that they do naturally call down chastisement from Him who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to die for it? Yes, it is in our hearts we discover the explanation of our sorrows; and instead of mourning and repining that affliction has been visited upon us, we should rather mourn over that sad perversion of our nature which has rendered affliction necessary. If you saw a parent, whose benevolence had been unquestioned, inflicting heavy chastisement upon a favoured child, would your first emotion be to censure the parent's severity? or would you not rather grieve that the child's perverseness had forced him to do violence to the tenderness of his parental emotion? That great Being who made us has been graciously pleased to declare himself our Father: and where is earthly parent whose benevolence and long-suffering can ever teach us faintly to understand the mercy of our Father who is in heaven? What then are we to think of the condition of our nature and estate when they call down chastisement from this merciful and long-suffering Father? Yes, brethren; sorrow itself teaches us that we have gone out of the right way, and that although man had wandered from the path, and had fallen away from the estate in which he was originally made—even in his very wanderings he was not forsaken by the great Creator. Many were the warnings, many the invitations, sent to him. Prophets were raised up; miracles were wrought; and at the last, when the fulness of time was come, our blessed Lord himself came into the world, became of no reputation, took our form (the form of a servant) upon him, and came to preach to all that were afflicted in Zion, "to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

And in what form did he come, and in what condition did he come? He might, if it had so pleased him, have wrought the redemption of mankind, and never endured a pang save that which he suffered upon Calvary. He might, if it had so pleased him, have passed along gorgeously and gloriously upon the earth, from

the cradle to the cross ; and have terminated a bright and glorious career in that death upon Calvary ; and have put from him in the mean time all the suffering that flesh is heir to. But he has taught us that he is "a faithful high-priest:" he has taught us that there is not an affliction, sin only excepted, which man is heir to, which the Lord Jesus did not endure. He did not come as a conqueror or as a king: no desolating fury marked the method of his arrangements; no prosperous land acknowledged the blessings of his sway. He did not go forth with kings and the great ones of this earth crowding at his chariot wheels: he did not sit on his throne, and give directions to monarchs, who bent submissively before him: and why? Because he would have his life speak to the sorrowful and the contrite heart: because while he was on earth it was to the humble, to the poor, to the afflicted, that his words went forth with most power, and that his invitations were most mightily addressed. Had he taken a station high in the world's dignities, who would have been around him? The ambitious, the worldly, the time-serving; those who desire to follow his steps, and to seek the heavenly promises in the next world, if the way to it led along the dignities of this world: and they would have kept aloof the humble, the broken-hearted: those whom the Lord wished especially to call to him would have been put aside. Therefore he came as a man of sorrows; therefore he came enduring every affliction: and while he stayed in the world, the meanest of the world's inhabitants was not spurned from him. Then he called around him the poor, and they came. There was no suffering which we can experience, sin only excepted, that he did not endure. A bosom friend was his betrayer: those whom he came to save rejected him: and Barabbas, a robber, was preferred to the Lord Jesus: and when the robber was loosed from his prison, the Lord was nailed on his cross to die. And yet for all this his thoughts were for men, and his prayer for men; and his expiring breath was the prayer, "Father, forgive them." And He who, when upon the earth, in the midst of all these sorrows, teaching us thus that he knew what sorrow is, teaching us that he by actual perception of it understood what sorrow is; He who when on earth gave the counsel, the precept, and the invitation to man to come unto him in his sorrows—he gives it still from heaven: he has written it down in that blessed book which he caused to be written for our learning: and now, as then, he invites all that labour and are heavy laden to come to him for their rest.

Brethren, is it not mournfully instructive, when we consider who it is that gives this invitation—what it is that it promises—and the multitudes, extensive as is the extent of mankind, to whom it is addressed—is it not mournfully instructive that this should be the invitation which is least of all regarded? I am quite confident if there could be spoken from heaven now, a voice which said that any earthly dignity, or any relief from earthly suffering, could be bestowed upon men, that all the ambitious of the earth, and all the afflicted of the earth would crowd, eagerly crowd, to obtain that advancement or that deliverance. We know that while our blessed Lord was here on earth, his words and his works were not without their effect: "His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them." And we know too, we know perfectly well, that if mortal infirmities were now to

be considered, and that ease were to be sought for, we would hear the invitation with equal eagerness, we would watch for the manifestation of power with equal anxiety, and we would not be among the last to come with our own sorrows, and to bring our friends with us, and to untile the house if we could not get at him for the press. And shall men be less regardful of their spiritual afflictions? Shall we not go out to him, with our sense of spiritual wretchedness and want, and supplicate for relief? Will any man say that the eye which does not look upon the works of this inferior creation is in a more afflicted state of blindness than the heart which is unvisited by "the day-spring from on high?" Will any man say that it is a more painful thing to be precluded by the want of power to hear, from enjoying the communications which men may make, than to have a heart which is dead to the whispers of divine love? Is it more distressing to have no voice which can share in the communications of men, than to have a heart which will send forth no petition to the Saviour? Is it more afflicting to be motionless among those who have the palsy, than it is to have every good resolution palsied by the influence of sin? Is demoniacal possession more fatal in its consequences, more afflicting in its nature, than the melancholy despotism of one bad passion? And yet we know that while multitudes crowded around our blessed Saviour's steps wherever he went, while their mortal infirmities needed to be healed; thousands, day after day, read his gracious invitations, and feel no fluttering of the heart, no earnest desire of the mind, no yearning of the understanding, to pursue that gracious invitation, or the thoughts which it suggests, and pray that God may make them profitable.

You cannot say that man is altered since the Gospel was first promulgated—so altered as that he would now attend to what he then disregarded—or that he would now neglect what he was then eager to solicit. You know perfectly well, that now, as in the old time, men would be earnest to seek every aid by which their bodily affliction could be relieved. You know perfectly well what men will endure, what they will hazard, what they will renounce, in order to obtain the hope of being released from any bodily infirmity. Am I not right when I say that you have every day proofs before your eyes that men will renounce their country, friends, home—all those appliances that render life easy or desirable; that they will go into far foreign lands, that they will go where they can have none of the soothing intercourse in which they had rejoiced; that they will renounce whatever made life dear to them; that they will submit to observances which render it painful; and that they will do this—for what? Is it in an assured hope that they may again become young and lusty, as the eagle, that their strength, their hopes, their enjoyments, may all be renewed again? No; they will do all this with no higher expectation than that they shall thus be enabled to preserve from crumbling to decay a few years longer the ruins of a cheerless existence. And yet the men, who, to make a miserable life linger heavily for these few years, will thus exert themselves, will not address themselves with the earnestness with which they are called to exert themselves to ask the pardon which the Lord offers, to embrace the invitation which he addresses to all. We know that the body which is in a few years to be laid in the grave, in the midst of death, which in a few years must be the prey of the worm, is the object of their anxiety; and they are comparatively thoughtless of that immortal part which knows no death, upon which

time has no power, which must endure for ever, and for ever retain its keen sensibility to the delight of living in God's presence, or the misery of being excluded from it.

What is it that makes men regardless of this invitation? Will you ask yourselves what it is? Are you too happy to give your minds to the invitation which Christ has spoken? Will you say that your days pass along in so unclouded a delight, and that pleasures ever new so constantly solicit you, that your thoughts are distracted, and your attention turned from what belongs to the other world? This would, indeed, be a mournful reason: it would be to say God has been so bountiful to you that you cannot spare time to thank him; that he has given you friends, fortune, favour in the sight of men, strength, and all prosperity, and that these good gifts are bringing a curse upon you; that these good gifts interpose to turn your thoughts from God, and eclipse the light of that hope which Christ has lighted up for you, and that they chain down the soul here amid the temporary pleasures of time; that God gave you his gifts which you should employ in his service—that if you have wisdom, if you have strength, if you have wealth, if you have favour in the sight of men, you might use all those gifts to his glory in the salvation of human souls; and that you have used them to make you forgetful of him, and convert them into snares by which your soul is entangled hopelessly amidst the evils of this world.

But it is not so: no man who reflects for a moment will ever pronounce to his own heart, without receiving from his own heart a stern rebuke, that he cannot think of God, or thank God, because God has been bountiful to him. That the gifts which God has given have had the effect of extinguishing the flame of thankfulness in his heart towards the Great Giver—no man can utter this to his heart without being rebuked and confounded. But it is a truth, which it is humiliating to man to speak to man, and yet that man has perpetually occasion to be reminded of—it is a truth, that there are multitudes who feel themselves separated from God even by the very sorrows which ought to have separated them from this world's captivations. It is certainly a strange thing, a very strange thing, and we cannot but wonder at the strangeness of it, that the enemy of souls shall frequently succeed in securing his victims for the next world, by rendering them in this world miserable; that by throwing darkness and clouds and sorrow around them here—by frowning a darker horror upon the gloom of the dungeon in which the soul is imprisoned, he shall render that soul regardless of the light which shines and would draw it from the earth, and shall fix that soul as his victim for the blackness of darkness for ever. And yet there is no man who has known sorrow who has not also known that one aspect, and the dreariest aspect of sorrow, is that in which it forbids man to come to God. It is a fearful thing, that frequently man will say, "My afflictions are so heavy that I cannot lift up my soul to God." It is a fearful thing to hear man say, "I have suffered so, I am so encumbered, I am so distressed, that I cannot give my mind to God; and I cannot even enter into the house of prayer to tell out my sins and my sorrows before him." And yet, however mournful and mortifying this is, we know, and all who are acquainted with man's nature know, that it is a mournful truth; and that in sorrow there is nothing so grievous as the temptation which accompanies it, and by which men are allured to seek some forgetfulness of their grief in things that render



their souls more and more painfully and dangerously acquainted with sin, and to turn them from Him who would give rest and relief. And therefore it is that He who made us, and who, knowing the spirit of a man, has in the religion which he appointed as the comforter, the guide, and the corrector of life, rendered its application especially powerful when addressed to the heart that mourns. Every body who has in sorrow felt the invitations which the Gospel breathes out has also felt that they have in sorrow a power, a tenderness, a heart-searching and a heart-soothing efficacy, which he never knew them to have before. It is as if the Lord Jesus Christ, who came himself to be a man of sorrows, took those sorrows under his special protection; that he invites men to draw near, that he makes them acquainted with the remedy by which sorrow is relieved; that he makes their hearts sensible to the efficacy of that invitation by which the mourners are summoned; and makes them know that, if there is in sorrow a power to subdue and to rend the heart—there is a balm, a blessed balm, which religion sheds, to heal those sorrows, and makes them to be accounted of no moment in comparison with the rejoicing which follows upon it.

It is a subject which should always engage your thoughts whenever the thought of sorrow reaches the heart, that you are not in your sorrows less acceptable, but rather more acceptable, to Him who came to save sinners; and let it have the effect of preventing you from, in any case, seeking those precarious and dangerous resources which the world sometimes lavishes, and most insincerely proffers. We know perfectly well—and the knowledge that man has, has been embodied in the opinion which prevailed in heathen time—that the effect of sorrow, of any grief upon the soul, is, as it were, to make man less confident, less trusting than he had been before. And if calamity overtake one in whose heart there has not been love and disposition to trust in the Lord Jesus, that calamity comes with a fearful power to carry him off from the Lord. But to him who receives the Gospel there is addressed the assurance, that he who is afflicted is chastened by the Lord, because the Lord loves him; and it is merciful as well as wise in the appointments of religion thus to satisfy the sad heart, that in its sorrow it will be ever more acceptable to Him who gives the blessed invitation. See how you find it in life: see, if you are a kind and considerate friend, how you behave towards the friend upon whom sorrow has laid its heavy hand. Do you not know that he becomes more jealous, more watchful, more suspicious? Are you not sure of that? Are you not sure, also, that if he has offended you, he becomes more dubious, more estranged, from the desire to acknowledge his offence and to ask your pardon? And why? Because he is in a state in which he has become more distrustful of every body's love. The same sorrow which has lessened his confidence in himself, destroys his trust in the regard in which he is held by others. And see how you feel yourself in such cases. If you yourself have offended some kind and good friend, and if you come into the presence of your friend with a half-formed desire to make an acknowledgment of your trespass, and to seek his pardon; and if, as you stand before him prepared to make the confession, you see that his brow is fixed, his countenance stern, that there is no kindness, no appearance of sympathy, will you not find that the purpose with which you came becomes frozen in your heart, and that you cannot utter the words of humiliation? But if, as you look, you discern some yearning of love towards you in the countenance on

which your eye is fixed—if there be some manifestation of tenderness in the countenance—if there be the appearance of a tear—then can you, with all readiness, with all submission, pour forth the feelings that labour within your heart, and declare that you have offended, and supplicate the pardon of him in whose heart you have the assurance your offence has not destroyed affection for you. And when you have considered this, you will see how merciful and how gracious it is in our blessed Lord to give us the invitation, how he loves and cares for us in our sorrows, even in the wanderings of our sinful hearts; that thus you can understand the value of the Lord's prayers and tears and watching for men; and that you can find that, while upon the cross of Calvary, he died to make atonement for the sins of the whole world by that sight of love, and tenderness, and suffering, and by those blessed invitations he has given, he has been acting and speaking to the heart of sinners, to awaken them, that they may accept the salvation he has purchased for them.

Let it be our trust, brethren, that we shall all understand this invitation. To him in whose heart it has once obtained an entrance, all objects in nature, all incidents in nature, bring the invitation to his relief. If once you have felt at the heart that Christ has spoken to you the touching words, "Come to me, and I will give you rest," you cannot turn to any estate in life, to any place in the wide expanse of nature, to any scene or circumstance in which there will not be the remembrance addressed to you of that gracious invitation. The still whisper of the summer's breeze will convey it to the heart: the lingering lights of the summer's evening will look in upon your hearts with it. The motions of moonlight, the setting sun, the silence of the sparkling firmament will give it to you. But the Bible, which God has given you for your learning, which he has preserved for you, will speak it to you continually; and his holy church, throughout all the world, will acknowledge and proclaim it to you.

If you are, therefore, anxious that it shall be preserved to you, and spoken to all, that all men may profit by it; and even in the humble demonstration which you are now called on to make of your regard for the institution by which God's word is proclaimed to men; let there be in your mind this morning, the recollection that a word in season may have often turned a soul from sin; and that surrounding the addresses appointed by God to be made to his creatures with the due decorum and propriety which his word demands, the result of such exertions shall not be fruitless. Remember what in the old time was done in order that that Bible, which is written for our learning and for our hope, should be preserved to us. The Lord Jesus spoke his word of invitation to many careless ears, and the cities in which he spoke them have fallen into decay, and the nation to whom he spake them is scattered over the world. But while the palaces in which they sounded have mouldered in the dust—while the cities have disappeared—while the splendour of their stately buildings have vanished away—the words that the Lord spake have been preserved so as to communicate to our hearts, at this day, in full power and efficacy, the gracious invitations which he addressed to men of old. And at what sacrifices! Many a time, in the elder day, when tyrants cruelly raged against God's church—many a time when it was proposed to men to halt and hesitate between the saving of their own lives and the saving of God's word from profanation, they gave their own bodies to the flames, that their children might read God's word in their habitations. Many a time a man did

not hesitate for one instant whether he should give God's word to be burned, or go into the flames himself: and the Lord Jesus was with him in the flames. And in the days that followed, when it was sought to be destroyed, God was seen with his blessed word, and He who protected it from pagan tyrants in early Rome, protected it from wicked men in later days. I thank God, England has sent it forth into every part; and may she send it forth more extensively! And may you upon all occasions, even upon this humble one, seek that what God has preserved for you, you may cause to be spoken to others, to his praise; that they may hear his invitations continually addressed to them, and be assured that when they come to him he will in no wise cast them out.

### JOSHUA'S RESOLUTION.

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“THE resolution that Joshua expressed is a most noble resolution, and deserving of our most serious imitation, ‘*As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*’ He would not serve the Lord, either without his house, nor would he suffer his house to fear the Lord, and yet at the same time to neglect Him. ‘*As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*’ He was decidedly on His side; he had made a vow to be the Lord’s, and he would not go back. But he was not content with his own personal devotedness—‘*My house will serve the Lord.*’ He could not command the obedience of the tribes of Israel to the extent he wished, having now laid aside his public duties; but he still retained a power over his own family to demand of them to listen to instruction—he could command their ear, if not their hearts; and he was determined to command his household, that they might keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord might visit them with the good things of which he had spoken. He declares that he will serve the Lord as well as his house.

“It is to be lamented that there are heads of families who give up all thoughts of religion themselves, and yet at the same time feel sincere solicitude for the salvation of their children. There is a certain period at which they begin to imagine that it is in vain for them to turn their attention to religion, but still they feel the most sincere desire that their children and relations might be found partakers of eternal life. I recollect a passage in the diary and memoirs of the Rev. Mr. Williams, of Kidderminster, in which that good man observes, that when young, he was riding to market with a highly respectable person and his son, his acquaintances, and while they were walking and riding, and conversing together on indifferent subjects, the father stopped and demanded of his son, and enjoined him, to cultivate the acquaintance of that young man: for, said he, ‘he will lead you to religion, he will acquaint you with what is good; but as for me, he said, the time is gone by, my heart has become hard and insensible.’ How awful is such a declaration! What a dreadful acknowledgment! calm, and yet full of despair in the prospect of eternal ruin! How striking an illustration of the alarming potency of sin which makes a man contemplate with apathy and indifference the prospect of everlasting perdition!

“But with Joshua the case was totally different. ‘*As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*’ If all the tribes of Israel had determined to leave God, if all the families of these separate tribes had determined to abandon the sanctuary and institutions of His worship, yet Joshua’s heart was fixed, his mind was determined, he would dare to be singular, and to stand alone, despite the frowns of thousands who had cast off the fear of Jehovah. This, my friends, is a universal test of true religion; when we can dare to stand alone without example—when we can stem the torrent, and go against the course of this world, and assert the divine liberty of a mind which is devoted to God, and dependent on him, which looks for protection to him, and to him only.”—REV. ROBERT HALL.

## ADMISSION TO THE CHURCH IN HEAVEN.

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REV. R. AINSLIE,

NEW COURT CHAPEL, CAREY STREET, JANUARY 10, 1836.

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“Ye are come to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.”—HEBREWS, xii. 23, 24.

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THIS subject is fully understood by millions who were once as imperfectly acquainted with it as ourselves. There is no doubt or difficulty in their minds: it continually engages their attention, and they enjoy the unspeakable happiness of heaven. *We* do not fully understand it, and no one on earth can teach us a single lesson beyond what we have in the Bible. We must be content on many subjects with the elementary and exclusive information of the Scriptures. We should have known nothing of immortality, if God had not given us a revelation; and instead of being dissatisfied because abstruse and difficult points are not cleared up, and all heaven unveiled to our present vision, we should be grateful that “life and immortality are brought to light,” and that “what we know not now we shall know hereafter.”

It was under the strong excitement, created in Paul’s mind by his clear views of the surpassing glory of the Christian dispensation when contrasted with the Mosaic, that he penned the words I have read, and its sublime context. He exhibits in a clear and powerful manner, in the following verses, the privileges of the two dispensations. “Ye are not come to the mount which could be touched, and to flaming fire, and thick dark clouds, and blackness, and tempest; and to the sound of the trumpet, and to the voice of commandments, the hearers of which earnestly entreated that not a word might be added to them (for they could not bear the command; “if even a beast touch the mountain it shall be stoned or thrust through with a dart:” and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I am exceedingly afraid and tremble); but ye are come to mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born enrolled in heaven, and to the Judge, the God of all, and to the spirits of the just having obtained their reward, and to the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.” This passage describes the privilege of the believer in every act of worship he performs. It may also be viewed in another light, as describing the position, the exaltation, and glory of the believer, when at death he is admitted to the church in heaven.

This is the view we propose to take of it in the present discourse. The

place to which the believer is admitted is called mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. He becomes acquainted with the highest orders of created beings, and shares their happiness. He enters the general assembly and church of the first-born enrolled in heaven; he stands before the Judge, the God of all, is numbered with the spirits of the just, obtains his final reward, approaches the Mediator, loves to see Jesus, and knows that all has been freely conferred upon him through the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.

Our attention must be limited to that part of Paul's description contained in the text: "Ye are come to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." Confining ourselves to the text, we shall meditate upon the state of the soul, when it has left the body, and then consider what is necessary, in order that the soul may enter that state when it leaves this world.

First, we have to meditate upon THE STATE OF THE SOUL WHEN IT HAS LEFT THE BODY. There is nothing speculative in the text or context. We have the literal description of an ancient and memorable scene, as characteristic of the whole dispensation. And we have a figurative representation of the present position of the believer, but which is, at the same time, literally accurate as to his future state. God is now the object of our faith and worship. The spirits of the just form a part of our race. We think of them, look back upon their history, and rejoice in their triumphs: and we now love and worship Jesus the Mediator as equal with the Father and the eternal Spirit; and on him we rely for holiness and immortal happiness. But when the barriers of separation shall be removed, we shall see God; be numbered with the spirits of the just, and dwell with Jesus.

The first fact mentioned in the text is, "Ye are come to God the Judge of all." Mr. Stewart observes, that the transposition made by our English version, *to God the Judge of all*, is against the arrangement of the text, and fails to give the appropriate sense of the words: he therefore reads, "to the Judge the GOD OF ALL." There is a sense in which God is not the Judge of all. None will be *judged* but sinners. In the context, beings are referred to who have not sinned, and of them it cannot strictly be said that he is their Judge. But *he is* the GOD OF ALL: there is no exception in the universe. He is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and all else live, and move, and have their being in him. When death shall remove us, we shall stand before our Judge. Many judgments have already passed, and punishments have been inflicted. Adam and Eve were judged and punished; the antediluvian world was judged and destroyed; Sodom and Gomorrah were judged, and to this hour they are monuments of the Divine displeasure. Jerusalem was judged for the rejection of Christ, and punished with utter ruin. When we leave the body, there is a judgment, and it is decided whether we go to the place of the blessed or miserable. But there will be a final and general judgment of the whole universe of beings, who have sinned. The general judgment will not be confined to human beings, "the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved (and this after a process of judgment and expulsion) in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day." It

is inconceivably solemn to stand before the Judge of all the earth. There is so much in ourselves that we know of, for which he might punish us everlastingly, such a perfect acquaintance with our thoughts, words, and actions; such an impossibility of escaping detection, and so rigid an adherence to the great principles of his government, in maintaining truth and purity, that every sinner entering his presence must be filled with awe, and lie prostrate before him. He will not, however, be clothed with terror and anger to the believer. No transgressor can be justified before God who attempts to plead obedience to the law. The method of justification which he has declared in the New Testament, is the only one available for the sinner, and that is sufficient. Nothing is to be apprehended by the redeemed soul when in the presence of the Judge. There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus; and no one shall be able to establish any charge against the elect of God: for "Christ has died, yea, rather, is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

But the apostle speaks of the Judge as the *God of all*. No man has seen God at any time, but at death we approach him: every eye then sees him. What a change must pass over the spirit of man at such a moment. *In the presence of the godhead*. The uncreated and eternal spirit: Lord of all power and might; the author of every good gift, and of every perfect gift: the Father of Lights, in whom there is no variableness nor the shadow of a turning. Our Father who art in heaven. We now draw near to his veiled Majesty, and the power of his presence is often sensibly felt. We enter his presence to obtain forgiveness by the blood of sprinkling, to have our hearts raised to that world where he presides; by faith to unite our humble adoration and thanksgiving with the sinless creation around his throne, and to swell the praise of Him who is "God over all, blessed for evermore." But no forgiveness will be conferred in heaven. No sinner will be admitted there in such a state, and there can be nothing to forgive. This is the place of pardon, reconciliation, and justification. Heaven is the place of exaltation, glory, and reward. What thoughts shall fill our minds when, with a spiritual vision, enlarged capacity, pure hearts, and sensible of our happiness and the greatness of our deliverance, we shall see the unveiled glory of the Most High! Here, on every spot of earth; in every insect that wings its way above or around us, or crawls beneath our feet; in the deep caverns of earth and sea; in the expanse of heaven and of waters; in *man*, in *redeemed man*; in Christ, and in the Bible we see the glory of God. His glory, wisdom, power, and goodness, are all daily shewn to men, but there are brighter and more attractive manifestations in heaven. Adoration and praise are *there*, absorbing to angels and the spirits of the just, and the object of unceasing love and praise is the ever blessed and eternal godhead.

The apostle further says, "Ye are come to *the spirits of just men made perfect*." This may be explained of *perfection of nature*: of *state*, and of *final reward*. The description of them is unambiguous. There is nothing uncertain in the terms Paul uses, and no false charity; which, while it might allay prejudice in the church, cannot alter the state of the living or the dead. Often is it necessary instead of saying, "Sleep on and take your rest," to say, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give

you light." None but the spirits of the just enter heaven. The *spirit* enters before the *body*: they will be re-united at the resurrection. The righteousness or holiness which fits the spirit for heaven, is not its own. All that belongs to man, as a creature and sinner, at the great tribunal of the Judge, is disobedience and ungodliness. These will condemn and destroy, but they cannot justify and save. The righteousness of the spirits of the just, is Christ's. The Lord is our righteousness: He has undertaken to do for us what we could not accomplish, and from the beginning to the end of human redemption, it is all of grace through Christ. Believers in Christ are justified, sanctified, and will for ever be glorified.

They will be made perfect as to *their nature*. What delight could they have in God if they were still the subjects of sin and were hostile to God?—We had none when we were in such a state, and it is only as the initiatory state of regeneration and sanctification flourishes in us, and approximates to the divine likeness, that our souls enjoy God, and dwell above. Perfection of the intellectual powers eminently distinguish the spirits of the just. The decreased power and energy of the mind occasioned by sin is supplied; the feeble and grovelling conceptions of this state are exchanged for the clear, vivid, and heavenly views of God and truth which are manifest to every soul in heaven. Difficulties, which the shortsightedness of our present state created or magnified, readily disappear: perplexing doubts as to God's providence and grace, and his government of men, are removed, when the soul enters the eternal kingdom and lives under the mild and benignant reign of the King of kings. All the moral affections, as well as the intellectual powers, are restored to their proper tone; spiritual health, and paradisaical vigour and harmony. O, how lovely must man be in that state! We shall consort with the spirits of the just, with stronger sympathy and affection probably than with the other spirits of the heavenly world. The ascending scale from man upwards may be as lofty as the descending scale from man downwards is deep. Many orders of being may be invested with great attractions, but the sympathy and love of the redeemed will not be lessened by the higher rank and more splendid powers and distinctions of other spirits. The godhead sustains a relation to the spirits of the just which is singular, and, probably, does not exist with any other race. There will therefore eternally appear in the redeemed family, features of inexpressible interest; and while we may have to study evidences of almighty power and wisdom in other beings which are not manifest in us, they will ever look at us as the objects of eternal and boundless love, and as composing the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood.

The *state* also of the spirits of the just is perfect, as well as their nature, and their reward is complete. It is the *heavenly* state into which they have entered. Whatever is necessary to unchanging happiness they possess. They are filled with pure delight in the presence of God. The fulness of blessing which issues from his throne satisfies every soul, however vast. The highest state of rectitude—conformity to God's likeness divine love, and spirituality of devotion—characterize them all; and their testimony is that "in his presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

The change from a state of sin to a state of holiness is represented by strong



and figurative language. We are said to be "translated out of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son." "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." If these things be true, as to the change that passes upon us in the present state by becoming acquainted with God through the influences of the spirit, and seeing the necessity of a Saviour, how great must be that change which shall pass upon our spirits at death! We are now advancing to the period when it shall take place. Many anxieties may exist and perplex our spirits before it arrives. But when it is said, "*Ye are come* to the Judge, the God of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect," we shall need the omnipotent strength of God to bear us up under the overwhelming glories of that state. The immeasurable regions of that world, with its spiritual population, its divine realities and glories, shall delight, enchant, and overpower us. The object of fervent desire will be attained, for we shall see Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

To this Paul refers, as to another fact connected with the admission of the soul to the church in heaven. If the members of the church shall be loved by each other on account of the natural and spiritual brotherhood existing between them—the Head of the church appearing in human nature, and the fulness of the godhead dwelling in him and exalting that nature above every other, shall be loved more intensely. When certain Greeks said "We would see Jesus," a feeling of curiosity was, probably, mingled with a spirit of inquiry, and they sought to gratify it. But in truly spiritual minds, I do not think there is much curiosity about the *realities* of the eternal state. There may be great anxiety: some subjects may be often revolved, on which more light is desired: but an idle curiosity I do not think very common. Higher and spiritual feelings occupy the soul, and there is no space allotted for what is merely speculative, unsubstantial, and unassociated with our happiness in that state. As to the fact of the vision of Christ, there can be no doubt. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." "Ye are come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant." He gladdened many a heart in the days of his humiliation. "But when the great Judge, with equal eye o'er all" his redeemed sons and daughters, shall come in the clouds of heaven, the joy of myriads will be *complete*. We shall look upon him as our restorer and saviour—our prophet, priest, and king. His original glory will not then be shrouded, for his glorified humanity will emit its splendour to every being in his presence: with adoring gratitude, praise, and love, you will look upon Jesus. What force and beauty you will then see were in the prophet's expression, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, the Prince of Peace." We shall be humbled before him, and cast our crowns at his feet, while we sing, "Worthy the Lamb." *Now* the object of faith, *then* of vision; *now* trusted and at times dishonoured by our unbelief, but *then* the altogether lovely, and the author of heavenly bliss. *Some* see no beauty in Christ *now*, and they would see none *then*. There must be a state of the heart corresponding with the holiness of Christ and of heaven, to fit men to delight in such beatific scenes. Where this exists (and in every case it is the work of

the Holy Spirit), then there is delight in Christ: the path of life is much smoothed; for although it may be rugged, the end of it is perceived: and such a "prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus" animates us in our course, and we press forward to our final reward. Be encouraged, then, with the apostolic representation of your privileges, exaltation, and glory, when you shall leave this world. Ever keep in view the objects and glories of eternity. They shall endure, but all earthly things shall wax old as doth a garment, and shall be changed. The pleasures of devotion, of love to Christ, of praising God, of dwelling near his throne, shall be eternal. At his right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

To make the part of the subject we have just attended to more practically useful, we shall consider, secondly, WHAT IS NECESSARY TO OUR ENTRANCE UPON SUCH A STATE. "Ye are come:" does it refer to the whole race? or is it a peculiar people, distinguished by principles, piety, and faith, that the wise, the worldly, and the wealthy treat with scorn? The apostle Peter answers the question, when he thus describes the company of believers: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." There are two changes necessary before we can join the spirits of the just. The first relates to the mind: the second to the body.

The change of *mind* is nothing less than that "godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto life," the new birth unto righteousness, and the sanctification of the soul by the Holy Spirit. No thought, however deep; no taste, however refined; no morality, however elevating, can raise the soul of a sinner to reconciliation and fellowship with God. The great change which is necessary, and must be the commencement of the Christian character, is that insisted on by Christ in his conversation with Nicodemus: "Ye must be born again:" "Except a man be born of water and of the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. An imperfect obedience to a pure and spiritual law cannot be accepted. No rites and ceremonies can be admitted as the pleas of justification. No deeds of alms-giving can be registered with a view to pardon the sin of other actions, and of other periods of life. The Almighty regards men in their sinful state, not only as beings who have degraded themselves, but as those who are yet capable of rising to dignity and glory. All folly, useless appeals to the external senses, a variety of attitudes, and the love of pomp and ceremony in the house of God, are treated by the Almighty as vain oblations: but when he sees an immortal soul struggling against sin, praying for divine aid to resist and overcome it; when the heart loathes iniquity, and the spirit is broken and contrite, then God sees an object worthy of his regard. He will not turn away his ear from any prayer offered in this state, and he will not fail to impart strength to every creature, coming to him as the source of light, power, and sanctifying grace, that he may finally reach heaven and dwell with God.

The change to which I am alluding is a *real change*. The religion of Christ has especially to do with the state of the heart before God, and not with ceremonial observances. I urge this fact upon the serious consideration of all who

may have thought that the duties of religion were merely nominal, and its results secured by a blind and indifferent obedience to some of the external claims of revealed truth. The heart must be broken and its vain imaginations destroyed, its carnal affections and propensities subdued by God's grace, and the whole current of its thoughts and feelings turned into the channel of the love of God, spiritual truth, and practical holiness. Such a change is indispensable to fellowship with God and fitness for heaven. Two cannot walk together except they be agreed, and there can be no agreement nor fellowship with the Almighty where the mind is carnal, for then hostility bears its awful and desolating rule. The same state unfits us for heaven. If a soul in its unregenerate state could enter the society of the spirits of the just, it would not be happy. A wicked man is not happy in the presence and spiritual exercises of the truly pious on earth. It is easily accounted for. Ignorant of God, disaffected to his authority and government, unacquainted with the power of truth, and the hidden life of a Christian, looking intently and fondly upon this present world, its pleasures and honours, believing its vain promises, full of pride, conceit, envy, malice, wrath, deceit, hypocrisy, and inordinate lusts; it cannot be happy among those who loathe and abhor sin in any or every form. Such a soul would soon discover and avow how ungenial was such society, and that a heaven and services of that class possessed no charm. Nothing would satisfy it till it descended to kindred companions, and could associate with those equally corrupt and depraved with itself. Facts like these should forcibly remind us of the necessity of the agency of the Holy Spirit to work in us this great change. We must be born of the Spirit, from whom all holy desires and all just works do proceed. There can be no spiritual enjoyment on earth and none in heaven without it. We must be *prepared* to enjoy spiritual bliss before we shall either covet or appreciate it. And what is religion without enjoyment? What are our public and solemn services if they are not the means of spiritual life and enjoyment to our souls? If religion be to us as a barren rock, or a parched desert, our spiritual existence would soon wither, and death would advance with gigantic strides. But it is not so. Our sweetest pleasures of life flow from it, and our most solid joys in death will originate in it: and we expect that

“After death its joys will be  
Lasting as eternity.”

There is a change that must pass upon *the body* as well as upon the mind before it can be said, “*ye are come* to the Judge, the God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.” That change is *death*. It is an awful change, and most momentous in its consequences. We think much of life, its duties and pleasures. Our thoughts roam to other families, to other nations, and sometimes to other worlds; but upon death we do not like to dwell. There is nothing inviting in its appearance, except the clearness with which it enables us to contemplate our own end, and the power with which it addresses us to prepare for eternity. We have all perhaps looked upon the face of the dead. An infant or a youth, a lovely sister, a venerable father or mother, a wife or husband, in the power of, and subject to, death, may have arrested the eye that likes not the appearance of death, and checked the ebullitions of the

gay and volatile feeling usually indulged. How mysterious is death! The mind has fled; the body is prostrate; physical energy is annihilated; the heart has ceased to beat, and the blood to flow. The frame is cold, the eye glazed, the bloom has faded from the cheek, the ear is deaf, the tongue is silent, the limbs are motionless, and there is no response of feeling and of sentiment. The process of decay begins to shew itself, and the offensiveness of a body, recently embraced with fondness, demands its removal from the society of the living, and its habitation in the grave. We perform the last office of placing it in the grave, and there we see other processes of death and other stages of decay. The history of the dead of former generations is brought to view by the fragments of their frames scattered at the grave's mouth, and we seem to feel that we are the living among the dead.

How every earthly tie is snapped by death! The parent must part with the child, and the child the parent: the brother with the sister, and the sister the brother. Civil connexions are dissolved; families are broken up; and where once many were gathered under the roof of the father, they are now dispersed, and the wreck of a large household can only be found after diligent and troublesome inquiry. Neighbourhoods break up in the same way. One generation succeeds another in the busy scene of merchandize; and the solitary remnant of a former age looks upon those who have come after him, and in thought, feeling, and habit, he is the man of former times. What has thus transpired ever since the foundation of the world, is now going on, and will not stop till the ravages and desolations of death are complete. *And must I die?* Is this body to dwell in the cold grave? Is this flesh I now strive to maintain in health, to be reduced to dust, and my mind by which I think, in which I feel which prompts the movements of my body, and which employs it for the fulfilment of its desires and purposes, to appear before the Judge, the God of all? *And can I be indifferent to such a change?* A change that may take place *directly*, and *must*, in a few years, with many, and but a few even with him in this assembly who may have to live the longest? Indifference must be shaken off! It will be profitable to try and realize the last scenes of life: the scene of death, and the entrance of the soul to a future state. If you dwell upon it, the longest interval ere it takes place will appear to be but short. The engagements of time, however important in their present influences and results, will dwindle to an atom of dust in our estimation: and the preparation of the soul for glory by the method of God's appointment, will appear to be the great object worth living for. We cannot avoid death. His arrows may be flying thickly around us; but his aim is true when he wounds with the intent to kill. But death, the last enemy of man shall be destroyed. The soul is now released from the body by death, and death is the penalty of sin. But the Christian need not sit down and repine because death slays his thousands and tens of thousands! He knows who has said, "O grave, I will be thy destruction:" and he can triumphantly, through Christ, say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

I have endeavoured to present to you the scriptural view of the state of the

soul when it leaves the body. The view we have taken is in harmony, we think, with all the passages that refer to the subject, though an examination of such passages has not been entered upon this morning. The author of the text when writing to the Corinthians, says, "We are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." We have taken this view of the subject, and have spoken of the Judge the God of all; of the perfection of nature, the state, and final reward of the spirits of just men, and the glory and blessedness of seeing Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. In the second part of the subject we have stated that the regeneration and sanctification of the mind by the Holy Spirit, and its purification from sin by the blood of atonement, are necessary for its admission to heaven; and in consequence of sin, the death of the body is necessary for the release of the soul, and that death must take place before it can literally be said to the believer, "Ye are come to the Judge the God of all."

There are two or three reflections suggested by the subject; which I offer, and then close.

The first is, *Who of us will finally be united with the redeemed; see Jesus, and dwell for ever with the Godhead? Shall we all? Not one exception? What a delightful thought if it be true! And is it not true? Who is the exception? Who has the testimony within him, that if he were now to die he should be eternally lost? What a mercy you are not dead, and that your state is not irrevocably fixed! Let it no longer continue what it has been, and what it is at this moment. The thought is inexpressibly painful, that there are men continually sitting under the sound of the Gospel: men who approve its doctrines, and precepts, respect its institutions, voluntarily support its ministers, and cheerfully contribute to circulate the inspired book which publishes its tidings, and yet they are not saved by it. I do beseech such persons, seriously to think of that hour, when they shall leave the world. You will, you must leave this state: have you thought to what world you shall go? You manfully grapple with other difficult subjects, and your minds are daily exercised with calculations relating to this life. O spend one day; if you think that period too long, spend one hour in examining yourself, and in prayer to God to enlighten your mind upon a subject of such interest to you. It will be one of the best spent hours in your whole life. It will have a bearing on eternity. It will embrace the questions of a state of friendship or enmity with God, of reconciliation or confirmed alienation, of forgiveness or perpetuated rebellion, of a happy or miserable death-bed, of endless happiness or misery, and these, as relating to yourself.* Others present, hope to join the spirits of just men, when they leave the earth. Your happiness is great with such a prospect. Such a hope maketh not ashamed. You are strengthened and encouraged, under many of the afflictions and difficulties of the present life by your prospects of the future. How blessed shall that day be in our history when these fond anticipations shall be realized! The same arm which shall have supported us under all our sorrows, will then support us amid the glories of perfect men, angels, of the Mediator, and the throne of Jehovah.

Secondly: *The pious dead are not lost to themselves, their cotemporaries, nor their successors.* They are holy, and happy, and possessed of durable riches. They have attained

“ All they desired or wished below.”

Rich in the love of the Father, and the covenant blessings of the death of Christ, their perfection enables them to enjoy the happiness which God confers in heaven. How soon also do they meet all the pious they knew on earth. A few years bring to the celestial Paradise those whom they left behind, and the generation to which they belonged, and the next that followed are soon complete. We, the successors of the last generation, shall again be cotemporaries with our fathers, and the pious, not only of the past but of every preceding age, when we shall have come to the spirits of the just made perfect. All these truths and many much more inspiring and sublime are familiar to the perfected spirit of our beloved brother, who has recently been admitted to the church in heaven\*. It is but justice to his character and piety, to spend an hour in meditating upon the state into which he has entered: and this I have always thought the legitimate use the church should make of the decease of any of its members. The language of proud and flattering eulogy is as opposed to the principles of Christianity as it is to the correct taste of every one who is sensible that all excellence is only derived, and who would rather turn the tributary stream of praise to the ocean of eternal love, and give to God the glory, than receive it to swell the pride of the heart. Still we love the pious dead. They are not lost to us who succeed them. Their lives and excellences serve valuable purposes in the church, and their memory is embalmed in the hearts of all who love the Redeemer.

Finally—Let us not forget, in thinking of the present state of the church on earth, and in devising means for its enlargement, unity, and more efficient co-operation within itself, and influence upon the world, that part of it which is in heaven; *one family* on earth and in heaven, bearing the name of the same Saviour.

John Howe, speaking of them, says—“ All of them full of God, continually receiving the vital, satisfying, glorious communications of the every-where present, self-manifesting Deity; all full of reverence, and most dutiful love to the Father, Son, and Spirit: all formed into perpetual, lowliest, and most grateful adoration, with highest delight and pleasure; all apprehensive of their depending state, and that they owe their all to that fulness which filleth all in all. Every one in his own eyes a self-nothing, having no separate, divided interest, sentiment, will, or inclination. Every one continually self-consistent, agreeing with himself, ever free of all self-displeasure, never finding any cause or shadow of a cause for any angry self-reflection in their present perfect state: though not unmindful what they were, or might have been; and ascribing their present state and stability to the grace of God; and dedicating them all to the praise and glory of that most free and unaccountable grace; as well assured, and unsuspectingly conscious with inexpressible satisfaction of their acceptance with God, and placing with the fullest sense and relish their very life in his favour. All full of the most complacential benignity towards one another, counting each one's felicity his own, and every one's enjoyments

\* A Member of the Church, recently deceased.

being accordingly multiplied to many thousand fold, as he apprehends every one as perfectly pleased and happy as himself." Well might Paul, with still loftier views of the state of the redeemed, say, I "reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Believing these things, let us not faint in our pilgrimage. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things **which** are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things **which** are **seen** are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

## THE BELIEVER'S FREEDOM FROM SIN

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REV. S. ROBINS, A M.

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“ But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”—ROMANS, vi. 22.

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THE Apostle in this text brings to our view two subjects which are of universal concern; the two great hinges of Gospel truth—sin and salvation. Wheresoever it might have been his lot to labour, and amongst whatsoever people he might be cast, they never could be inappropriate subjects; for there were none who were not groaning under the consequences of sin, and none unto whom salvation would not be a most precious boon. And so now the minister of Christ exercising his office after the lapse of so many centuries, has still to take the same subject matter, and to deal amongst his people the same great truths. Wheresoever his ministry may be exercised, as long as he keeps closely and faithfully to the records of God's word, he finds that when treating of these great essential matters, he is most profiting the souls of his people, and best promoting the glory of that Master, to serve whom he hath consecrated himself.

Now there are two points of consideration which we derive from the text before us; and upon these we earnestly crave the blessing of the Lord. We would speak to you, in the first place, concerning the change which takes place in the spiritual condition of the believer: and, in the second place, of its results.

Now under the first of these heads we have to speak to you concerning THE CHANGE WHICH TAKES PLACE IN THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THE BELIEVER. He is “ made free from sin;” and hath “ become the servant of God.”

Now he is in various ways “ *free from sin.*” In the first and most obvious sense he is free from its *dominion*. There are several statements in the word of God which at first sight would appear inconsistent with each other, to be contradictory or irreconcilable. But we must explain Scripture by Scripture, and look for satisfaction and consistency in the declarations of the Lord. We have no manner of question that a pains-taking and a prayerful examination of his recorded will, shall not fail to direct us finally to this issue. The believer is free from the dominion of sin. In other places it is said, that “ the man of God is perfect;” that “ whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;” that he cannot commit sin; as in the present place he “ is made free from sin;” or as in another place it is said, “ sin hath no more dominion over him, because



ne is not under the law but under grace." Now the meaning of this is, not that the child of God on this side eternity attains unto that perfection which knows of no failing; not that he attains to such completeness of holy and sanctifying influences, as that he shall not say one word, nor do one work, in contravention of the law of God; for then there would not be a believer on the face of the earth, not one unto whom might attach this most glorious epithet. "There is none that doeth good, no not one:" "the imaginations of men's hearts are only evil continually:" "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Out of this lost condition he is truly brought by the operation of divine grace. But there will remain so much of his first sin, so much of wickedness to be borne as a burden with him to his grave, that he can lay no claim to the perfection of character which some in the blindness and pride of their heart, have arrogated to themselves, and which we think is one of the subtle devices of the enemy to cause us to descend from our watch-tower, and to remain unwary and unprayerful, believing ourselves perfect when we are on the brink of spiritual danger.

But the child of God is free from the dominion of sin, inasmuch as he is no longer its subject, as he no longer renders allegiance to it; as he no longer submits himself to it with the faculties of his mind, and the affections of his heart, to go on its errands and to do its bidding; but there hath arisen within him sturdy contention against sin. So far from owning its dominion over him, he sets himself on all occasions to resist and to overcome it.

But not only is he free from the dominion of sin as paramount in his heart, but he is free also from the *defilement* of sin. None knows so well as the child of God how defiling a thing sin is; how it taints and pollutes all the sources of creature endowments, and spoils all the services he can render; and how it hath blighted the world of man's heart. He is not so proud, he is not so arrogant, as to believe that he can stand in his own uprightness before God. He does not think that even the best and holiest deed that he can perform is so removed from its taint that he can depend on it for acceptance. He knows that in such cases he must lay his hand on his lips, and say, "Unclean, unclean!" and in the very dust of humility, lying on the earth before his God, he hath cause to ask pardon for the iniquity of his holy things. And yet in spite of this he is free from the defilement of sin. There hath been a fountain opened for him wherein to wash and be clean, and the leprosy cleaves to him no more. Though his sins have been as scarlet, yet, washing in the blood of Jesus, he shall become white as wool. Though in himself he be a polluted creature, and all the springs of thought and feeling are nothing but defilement—though in every purpose he hath formed sin hath had a place, and in every course of action to which he hath devoted himself sin hath been attached; though every word he hath spoken hath been the conveyance of sin—yet, standing before his God, wrapped in the pure white robe of the righteousness of Jesus, the Lord sees no sin in him; but he can come boldly unto the throne of grace, and just because he wears that robe he knows he shall not be sent away. He shall come by and by as a welcome guest, and he shall sit down at the marriage supper; and the warrant of his coming, and the assurance of his reception shall be this—that he wears the marriage garment, and therefore is he free from the defilement, as well as the dominion of sin.

Moreover God hath given unto him freedom from its *condemnation*. There

hath gone forth an awful sentence, promulgated in the very early days of this world's history. It was declared unto the first parent of human kind, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die:" and the stern attribute of God's justice is involved, his truth and his faithfulness are banded together, for the execution of the sentence, which hath been registered in heaven's courts; and there is no appeal. The sinner stands self-convicted, he hath not a syllable to utter in arrest of judgment. He can plead no word why sentence should not go forth against him, why the arm of the executive should not lay hold of him, and give him up to the punishment which hath been enacted. And yet, in spite of the miserableness of his condition, though he stands a speechless prisoner at the bar of the Eternal, hope is not quenched, all the sources of restoration are not shut up against him, but there is a way by which he may escape; and, believing in Jesus, he is free from condemnation. Christ hath set him free from "the curse of the law, having been made a curse for him; as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Just because the Lord Jesus hath bound to himself the case and the condition of every one of his elect people, and looking forward through all the ages and untold centuries of coming time, marketh them for his, taking the burden of all their sins upon himself, bindeth the crushing weight upon his own shoulders, he hath set them free—this is the plea that they may offer in the court; that one hath paid the debt; that their surety and representative hath taken on himself the penalty; and thereon may God's wrath spend itself, and therefrom may God's wrath exact the very uttermost farthing: but the original debtor goes free; the original malefactor escapes; and mercy and justice are herein reconciled, the one to the other, and all the great and glorious attributes of God have their entire vindication. And while justice is the most awful, and wears the most frowning aspect, and vengeance speaks in a voice of thunder, and sends forth its scathing lightnings—as Christ dies on the cross, so his mercy speaks in tones of such gentle tenderness as seraph never used, while he tells us, that there is opened a way by which God may be approached by his people as a God of love, dealing out his compassionate kindness even to those who once lay in the dungeon of condemnation.

The believer is set free, moreover, from *the remorse* of sin. It is not that he thinks lightly of it: it is not that with him it is a small matter to contravene the law of God. There is nothing within the whole compass of the world's contingencies that so troubles and so burthens him. It is not that he can deceive his heart, so as to believe that days, and weeks, and months, and years pass on, and no sin is borne with him. His memory goes back to past years, and even from the days of his childhood, even from the period of his earliest recollection, there hath been sin; and the aggregate is a mighty amount, and the catalogue of his transgressions hath been lengthened out, so that he crouches beneath its weight, and has the sharpest sting of remorse turned in his own heart. Yes; he knows that "if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sanctify to the purifying of the flesh; much more the blood of Jesus, who, through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, shall purge the conscience." And therefore it is that remorse is passed away. He remembers his sins, indeed, but it is for humility on the one hand, that there may be no pride or high-minded thought—and thankfulness, on the other hand, for God's chief mercy to his soul.

He is set free, moreover, from *the consequences* of sin ; strange as it may sound. Disease we know is one of those consequences. He hath no exemption from that ; but it lays hold upon him, fastens upon the springs of life, and takes away all the freshness, and the health, and the vigour of his body, and his frame becomes shattered and broken. Yet, in spite of all this, the disease that cometh to him is not a thing of punishment, but a thing of blessing. It is the message-bearer from his Father ; it is part of that great plan, the ultimate issue of which is nothing but good to the believer. The brother of sin is death ; and he escapes not death ; it crosses his threshold and comes into his house ; it takes away one and another out of his family circle, until at last its cold hand is laid on his own beating heart.

He is free from the *punishment* of sin. Its sting hath been extracted, and the bitterness taken away. His dying chamber becomes to him the vestibule of heaven, filled with angel forms waiting to bear away the spirit of their brother to the mansions of the blessed. Death is to him but the servant that his Father sends to fetch him home. He has been away too long : he has been in a strange land, till his spirit is weary and his heart is sick : and now he is to go to his Father's house, and dwell in his immediate presence, and have the light of his countenance ever shining on him, with no veil of mortality to intervene at all.

The believer, then, is set free from these things—the dominion of sin, its defilement, its condemnation, its remorseful feeling, and its bitter consequences. From all these he enjoys the liberty wherewith Christ endows his people.

But there is only one *way* for the attainment of this ; but one way in which this blessed and glorious emancipation can be achieved. Strange as it may sound, he is set free only by being brought into another service : he becomes "*the servant of God.*" The field of the heart can never remain unoccupied. man's heart is too fair a dwelling-place to be without a tenant. When Satan leaves him, through the expulsion which is wrought by the Spirit of God, then doth the Lord take possession of it as his own fair temple : and surely there was never reared for the honour of the Creator, so lovely and so worthy a dwelling-place as the regenerate heart. Then the believer, enjoying this privilege of freedom, is brought into new service ; is brought into the service of Him whom to obey is an ennobling, and an honourable, and an elevating thing. We can conceive something of this even upon earth. We can conceive in the intercourse of men with each other, that there can be a rendering of service which brings nothing but honour to him. We can conceive of that loyalty of heart which has nothing to do in the rendering of duty, with the earning of wages, or the terrors of personal fear ; which is not the service of the mercenary, on the one hand, nor of the slave on the other hand. We can conceive of the nobleness which belongs to the character of him to whom gratitude is the impelling motive which makes him seek his benefactor's dwelling-place, and watch his steps, and see how, in the intercourse of daily life, he may gladden him, and what he may do to give pleasure to that heart that hath poured its kindness upon him : and who shall say, but that this service is an elevating thing? Even so is it with the believer : he has felt what God hath done for him ; he hath seen how the Lord hath interposed for him : and then he knows, that it is not only his duty, but his highest and most glorious privilege, to consecrate himself, body, soul, and spirit, to his heavenly Benefactor : not that he can requite what he hath received at his hand, but that he may testify to others,

and to his own heart, that he is not unthankful for the bestowal of these blessings.

But ere this can take place, there must be a mighty change. He must be brought out of his original condition, which is one of slavery. He was born in the most debasing servitude; and just as it is in those countries on which the plague spot of slavery still lies, the mother who is herself a slave can give birth only to a slave, she can bestow upon her offspring no other inheritance than that which hath come down to her, an inheritance of galling fetters and the terrors of the lash; and she looks upon her little one, and knows that it must be a slave: even so man, who inherits from his first progenitor the slavery of sin, hath nothing else to bequeath to his child. He is born in sin, and therefore born a slave; and the circumstances of his bondage are so much the worse because he doth not feel them. The devil hath wrapped so much of the softness and the inducements of sin around the manacles, that they do not clank; and he hath so adorned the walls of his prison-house with what the carnal mind loves, that he is willing to stay in the dungeon a captive.

But Jesus comes, and he hath pity on the poor willing slave, and he breaks his chains, and unbars the doors of his prison-house, and brings him into light and liberty, makes him to be at his own disposal, and to look up as a freeman, and be no longer a slave. The state into which he is brought, the state of service to his Lord, is one which Christ himself hath consecrated; for you remember that he hath called his dear Son by this very name, "servant;" "Behold my *servant* whom I uphold." No marvel, then, that it was the name by which Moses loved to be called; that it was the title, the highest distinction unto which Paul's ambition soared; that it is the name by which angels delight to be distinguished, and which shall be borne by the glorified and the redeemed for ever and ever.

But mark you, beloved, the servant of God is not the mere formalist. You remember how, in the eighth chapter of John, our Lord opens this matter. He shews that the Pharisees, satisfied as they were with their own external forms, in spite of their boasted freedom, were slaves. They contended, that they had never been in bondage to any man; that they were Abraham's seed, and that all the rich and large amount of privileges belonged to them. But our Lord shewed them, and he sheweth us too, that whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. He shews, that whosoever the Son maketh free, he is free indeed. O, be sure of this, there is no other freedom. It is when He who bound our nature to him, and became our brother, our kinsman, for the redemption of the inheritance, when he introduced us into the new family, and brings us, by adoption, to be the sons and daughters of God, then, and not until then, that we enjoy liberty: and we may say, in the glowing language of the Apostle, "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." And thus it is, that the condition and the circumstances of the believer are, in all respects, changed from what they were.

And now we go on, as we proposed, in the second place, to consider THE RESULTS OF THIS CHANGE. "Ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." There are two consequences—the proximate, and the remote.

The immediate consequence is, that they should be *fruitful unto holiness*. Now it is the special distinction of that faith which was propagated by Jesus when seen that it hath practical results: and, we think, that by this circumstance, it is especially marked off from all the other forms of religion which have obtained, at various periods, in human society. It hath to do with every-day life; it meddles with men's duties: it is not merely a matter of chamber contemplation; it is not merely a matter which consists in certain professions of opinion; but it is to be written on the plain open tablet of man's intercourse with man; so that it shall be discovered in his actions, in those things which he carries on with relation to his fellows; it shall be discovered by the whole tenor and conduct of his changed life. There never prevailed a greater error in the world, than that by which men came to the notion that they might retire from active duty, and seek safety for their own souls in the cell of the monk, or the cave of the hermit. It was this mistake which first raised convents and monasteries—oftentimes the mere refuge of the idle, the mere receptacle of the vicious. But we understand the Gospel, as we trust, somewhat better; and we desire to carry it out in its manifestation every day, into every circumstance, in every place. We would have it with us in the morning, when we unclose our eyes to the newly-risen light: we would have it with us in the intercourse of our family circle: we would have it go forth with us into our daily occupation—in the carrying on the occupation of those businesses to which we have been appointed in providential arrangement: we would have it with us in all our bargain-making—in all our intercourse, whether of appointed occupation, or permitted pleasure: we would have it with us in the consideration of our past days, in the silence of our chamber, and when our heads are resting on the pillow. It is a thing never to be laid aside: it is thus to speak in our whole life: it is to give its colouring and its hue to every action. The believer is not merely a man of contemplation, but he is also a man of action; and he will apply the gauge of Gospel principle to the occupation which he follows, and he will try whether it be a lawful one. He will bring his every-day dealings to the standard of the Gospel, and he will see whether they reach the mark. It will not satisfy him, that other men's integrity is no higher than his own: it will not content him, that he may have done nothing which has transgressed the laws of human honour, of merchandize, or of integrity: he has a separate measure of his own; he has a higher standard for his own inner guidance.

There is, perhaps, nothing more perilous, than that we should make a cheap and easy substitution of open-mouthed profession of the Gospel, and use the language of Canaan, while our hearts are unchanged, and our lives are like the lives of the rest of the world. It is a very tempting thing to avoid the costly sacrifices that we are called upon to make; it is a very tempting thing to escape the self-denial which this involves. But, O, let me tell you, that, whilst you stop short of that self-denial which the Gospel claims, you have no seal set upon your profession that it is true and genuine; you have no ground for satisfaction in the sight of God; and you have nothing whereon your assurance can possibly be built.

The principles which, by the operation of the Spirit of God, are brought into existence and energy in the heart of the believer, are those which will have a universal application. We might easily conceive of other systems which should apply in certain cases, but the application of which would necessarily be more or less circumscribed. The Gospel is a *universal* code. It applies

in *this* century, and it was equally powerful *eighteen* centuries ago: it is applicable in our land: it is equally applicable in the most distant parts of our globe. Whether men are civilized or barbarous, whether they are educated or ignorant, lofty or low, happy or miserable—still the Gospel of Jesus Christ hath its prescriptions for every one of them.

And moreover, this principle of Gospel holiness implanted in the heart is of an *abiding* nature. It is not like the influence of human opinion, that may soon change, that may be inconsistent with what it has been. It is not like the restraint of human law; for that we may hope to avoid; we may escape the eye of the magistrate, or laugh to scorn the arm of the executive. But not so with the principles of the Gospel: there is set up an inner court, from whose enactments we can have no escape, for they extend to the whole life; so that no action, no word, no thought is exempt from them. We are in the presence of One who searches us, and who knows us; for he made us.

And moreover, it is an influence ever *increasing*. "The path of the just is as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." He in whom this principle of holiness hath once been implanted shall find that, under the favour of God, it daily expands, and works its root deeper, gains more influence over his heart, is written more plainly and legibly on the page of his life, and hath more effect in changing his character. Whether it be in public or in private, abroad or at home, in business or in the intercourse of their own circle, the Lord's people are a holy people; and we beg you, beloved, never to lose sight of this great Gospel truth. They who, by the grace of God, have been set free from sin, and made servants of the Lord, will bring forth fruit unto holiness: and there is no fruit which God so much loves to look upon—there is no fruit that grows beneath the skies, or in the palmy islands of the ocean, of such rich odour, of such rare fragrance, as the fruits of the Spirit of the Lord. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance—these have a preciousness in the sight of God which is not to be rendered by all the beauty and glory of the unfallen angels. God's people are a holy people. The Lord looketh complacently on the work which he himself commences and carries on within them. There is no thought of making payment or any favour to the Lord for granting it. They would not buy heaven by their performances, but by the increase of their holiness.

And so, mark, there is a connexion in the language of the apostle: one member of the sentence is bound up in close relationship with the other member of the sentence; as they bear "fruit unto holiness," so "*the end is everlasting life*." Now there is in every human heart an implanted principle, which nothing serves to quench or destroy—the love of life. We do not say of life under all circumstances; we do not say of life in all its pleasures and accommodations; but we say of life when it is stripped of these, and becomes the most waste and desolate existence that imagination can conceive; even *then* we cling to it, and the veriest wretch who tenants the most hapless home is unwilling to depart; he shrinks from the verge of the grave, and draws back with as much reluctance as those who dwell in the midst of luxury, and on whom prosperity hath set its smiles. And yet it is not here that we can be said to live; there is no field for the development of man's loftiest and best faculties. And, truly, we can hardly conceive it possible that he who hath entered into himself, and hath held communion with his own spirit, and hath

traced out the machinery of the inner man, and hath marked how fearfully and how wonderfully he is made; who hath looked into his own mind, and hath seen the structure of that marvellous apparatus which he bears about with him; we cannot believe that such a one will think the present sphere of existence, with all its imperfections and all its hinderances, can be the only sphere for which he is destined. For the most part, life is passed under mournful circumstances, under many privations: amongst ourselves, are thousands and tens of thousands, who spend long years in the murky dens of this dark city, plying their businesses from morn till night, in places where the rays of the sun struggle, and almost in vain, to find an entrance: and they know little of pleasant scenes; they know little of the refreshings of nature in her fairest aspect; they know little of the heart's gladness in its happiest moods; and they know nothing of the sweet companionship of a country home; they have not trodden the pleasant hill, and breathed the unburdened air: but in their smoky dwelling-places they have been wasted away amidst want, and many other sources of discomfort: it may be, that infirmity has been bound as a burden on their shoulders; it may be, that disease and pining sickness have been their chamber-fellows. But if it be not so; if they have had life, and all that life can give, and have seen nature in all her fairest aspects, and have dwelt on the panorama of most beautiful prospects; and if they have had wealth largely and lavishly poured upon them to produce them every earthly good; still hath the spirit ever and anon been fretting itself against the bars of its cage; and still there hath been the searching forward to something nobler and better which is beyond: and so there hath been discontent with present things. We can conceive of a man who shall have escaped very much from the bondage and the thralldom of the material—who may have been enabled to renounce things present, and to have communed with the intellectual and the spiritual—to live apart from the influence of present companionship, and to rest on the future, dim and dull though it may be: and there may be around him dreams of brighter and purer virtue than ever he had known before. And yet for even such a one, if he were a believer in Jesus, there would be something prepared beyond the dark hills of the present life, far more glorious and blessed than ever entered into his imagination to conceive.

Man feels that he is born for immortality; he feels that the present is not his portion; and therefore with the present he is not content: or if he be content, far is it indeed from mending his condition. If he be satisfied with earth and earthly things, what is but to have flung from him all the privileges of his manhood, and just to have taken up his lot and his condition with the beasts that perish.—to graze with them, and to sleep with them, and to die with them, and to lie beneath the clods of the valley. If it be so—if man hath fed on the unsubstantial fare of this world's satisfactions; then hath he bid farewell to all that is bright and glorious and great in immortality. Alas! alas! for the head that desires not that there shall be an expanding of its faculties, and a brightening of its intelligence, and an unveiling of its endowments! Alas! alas! for the heart that does not pant for companionship with the good, and the glorious, and the blessed of another world!

Beloved, we say to every one of you that you bear about within you something too good for this world; you carry about with you something too precious

to be given up to time and earth. There is not in all the world that which can satisfy the immortal spirit; there is not that which can satisfy any one of you when you are about to die. Well then, we tell you of Him who went down into the grave's darkness, and dwelt in the damp chamber, that he might bring life and immortality to light for you. We tell you of Him who went and wrestled with the last antagonist of his people, that having won a glorious victory, he might bring them everlasting gifts, with hope, and all that has to do with heaven and immortality, in the presence of God and the choirs of angels, and all the satisfaction of a city where sin hath never come and where it can never have an entrance.

But we tell you, this life is only to be found in Jesus. "This is life eternal—to know Him, the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," We know that natural light cometh from God, and is never the result of all the combinations of human skill, and all the efforts of human art. There might be the utmost pains-taking, and there might be devotedness of the largest amount of science; but light would never come. It is that which God jealously guards and vindicates as his own attribute. We might labour with the utmost anxiety, but it would be in vain: we might till the earth, and pass toilsome days; we might lay the hand to the plough, but except God sends the rain into the little furrows of the land, and causes his sun to ripen our harvest, it would be in vain: he must give the light which he at first bestowed. And just so is it spiritually: there will be no emotion and no stir of the soul excited, until the quickening Spirit hath been there, until Christ Jesus hath been there, until there be some development of our lost estate, until we see the helplessness and the misery in which we are steeped by nature, and until we come to seek for health, and life, and hope from Him who is the bestower of all good.

Be not content, then, in your bondage: rest not till you have thrown off your fetters; rest not till you are made servants of God. Be not satisfied that you are become servants of God till you have given evidence of it, till you bear fruit acceptable to God—which is the fruit of holiness. Above all things think of the "one thing needful:" and amidst all your exertions for your families, amidst all your pains-taking and thoughtful labour for those you love, let not your Bibles be shut up; let not the Gospel of Jesus Christ be unknown to you or to them. We bind this upon you as a matter of most solemn and earnest exhortation, that you flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold of eternal life



## THE POSSESSION OF THE INIQUITIES OF YOUTH IN AFTER LIFE.

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REV. H. MELVILL, A.M.

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“Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.”—JOB, xiii. 26.

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THESE are the words of Job himself, when addressing God in reference to the great sorrows with which he had been visited. The expostulations, for such they must be called, of the patriarch with his Maker, display often a forgetfulness and a boldness, which, if natural under circumstances of extraordinary trial, prove, that even in one so eminently holy, there was much that required to be subdued. Occasionally, however, in the midst of remonstrances, which, if not to be wondered at, cannot be justified, Job manifested a right sense of the ends of affliction, and a desire that those ends might be answered in himself. He was often irritated by the injurious suspicions and accusations of his friends; and in his zeal to refute what he knew to be false, spake unadvisedly with his lips. But when he removes his cause, as it were, from these incompetent judges, and spreads it before God, then, though there is a frequent querulousness, and a vein of irreverence, which we are bound to condemn, at other times we see glimpses of better and holier feeling, and recognize the workings of a spirit, sorely oppressed and wounded, but nevertheless conscious that God smote not without cause.

It is thus with the verses which stand immediately in connexion with our text. We will not say that the question, “Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?” is exactly that which became Job when addressing the Almighty. There is, to say the least, a reproachful tone in the interrogation, which we must all confess ought never to be used when a creature speaks to his Creator. But when the patriarch exclaims, “How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin;” we have tokens of a more becoming temper, and evidence that the sufferer considered the chastisement as just, and only longed to discover, that he might correct, what had displeased God in his conduct. This is the more to be admired and observed in Job, because it was just on this point that the whole controversy lay between himself and his friends. They argued under the wrong principle, that extraordinary calamity proved extraordinary wickedness; as though a man's character might be inferred from his condition: and, therefore, though not aware of any crime that Job had committed, they rashly concluded from his signal misfortune, that he must have perpetrated some signal, though indefinite misdoing; and they urged him, accordingly, to repentance and confession. But the patriarch was quite assured of his own

integrity, so far as dealings between man and man were concerned. He was confident that he had done nothing to warrant the suspicion to which he was thus subjected; and he was therefore bold and constant in his assertions of innocence.

But it is beautiful to observe, how, after vindicating himself before man he could yet humble himself before God. He knew, that these, his fellow-sinners had nothing wherewith to accuse him, all his dealings with them having been as much marked by benevolence as by justice: but then he equally knew that in the sight of God he was verily guilty; and that innumerable offences of which he himself had taken no note, stood registered against him in the court of heaven. He therefore turns from man to God, and having maintained to the one his uprightness, entreats of the other that he would make him know his faults: "How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin." He could only charge himself generally with those faults which must have been committed by him as a fallen, and therefore offending creature; that so, having obtained far greater knowledge of the respects in which he had done wrong, for the time to come he might resist evil more vigilantly. Indeed, whatever had been his circumspection and virtue in later days, he felt that in the season of youth, with passions less subjugated, and principles scarcely formed, he had done much to provoke God, and sow the seeds of a disquieted old age. We have no right, indeed, to suppose, that Job had spent what is called a dissolute youth, and had thus, in any peculiar manner treasured up the materials of remorse. The probability is altogether the other way; and we may rather believe, that, like Samuel, he "knew the Lord from a child," and "remembered his Creator in the days of his youth." Still in reflecting on the past, he could not doubt that there had been much in his conduct, whilst reason was yet weak, and piety in its infancy, to displease that Being who demands the thorough subjugation of every passion, and the thorough control of every power. He concluded, therefore, that possibly much of what he suffered should be traced to early sin as its origin; and this caused him to break into the exclamation of our text, "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth."

There is something very striking in the expression of "*possessing* the iniquities of his youth." It is as though the iniquities of youth so adhered and cleaved to a man in riper years, that there was no possibility of shaking them off: and it is upon the general fact, which seems thus conveyed in the language of the patriarch, that we propose to employ our present discourse. We know of nothing better calculated to fix the attention of the young, and to impress upon them the necessity of immediately seeking after God, than an exhibition of the truth, that the sins committed in the spring-time of life tell fearfully on its maturity and its decline. We know full well, that the common feeling in those who have yet lived a few years, and before whom the world has spread its attractions, rich in that colouring which they have not yet tried—it is, that there will be time enough hereafter to attend to the soul, and that the likelihood of lengthened days being great, they run but little risk in tasting of earth's pleasures before preparing for eternity. It avails very little that we attempt to meet this feeling with earnest and pathetic representations of the uncertainty of life; as this is just the point on which the mind is practically made up; and that there will be time for repentance is assumed as a kind of axiom by the

young. But if we can prove to them that all their sinful indulgences throw themselves forward, as it were, into the years which are assigned to the duties of religion, and that if they ever reach those years they will feel the iniquities fastening themselves upon them as an abiding possession—why we do not say that we shall succeed in prevailing with them to give God their first days, but we shall certainly have set before them a truth which will leave them more inexcusable than ever if they yet defer the turning to the Lord.

Neither is it to the young alone, that the subject thus opened by our text will address itself. If one so eminent for righteousness as the patriarch Job might consider himself chastened for the offences of his youth, is it not possible that much of the suffering which falls on the godly of the earth is the temporal retribution of their evil misdoings? And if so, we shall be able to explain much which seems otherwise strange in the dealings of our Maker, and to vindicate dispensations which are thought inconsistent with the known principles of his government. So that there are two general points of view under which we shall proceed to survey the truth derived from our text, that men are made in later years to possess the iniquities of their youth. The first is, that of the warning which it furnishes to those who are just at the outset of life. The second is, the explanation which it gives of those proceedings which might otherwise seem at variance with God's moral government.

Now it will be necessarily our business, under the first head of our discourse, to make good the truth and to illustrate the fact, that *men possess in after life the iniquities of their youth*. The whole power of THE WARNING must depend on the demonstration of the truth, and in its being so exhibited, that you may realize it as possibly made good in your own case. We shall therefore take upon us, so to set forth the possession of the iniquities of youth, that every one may understand how easily, yea, how unavoidably, he will entail his sins on himself, if he give his opening days to worldly pleasures and pursuits.

We begin, for the sake of illustration, by remarking, how difficult, and almost impossible a thing it is, with reference to the things of the present state of being, to make up by after diligence for time lost in youth. It is appointed by God, that one stage in life should be strictly preparatory to another, just as our whole residence on earth is preparatory to our residence in the invisible world. And it is further appointed, that the neglect of the special duties of any one stage, shall have consequences not to be repaired by any attention, however intense, to those of the following: just as (so perfect is the analogy) if we provide not for eternity while sojourning on earth, there will be afforded us no opportunity whatsoever of retrieving our error, and making good our lost ground. The earlier years of life are to be given to the processes of education, to that expansion of the mental powers, and that acquisition of knowledge, which shall qualify the boy for the occupations of the man. And if there have been a neglected boyhood, so that the mind's powers have not been disciplined and its chambers not stored with information, the consequences will propagate themselves to the extreme line of life; and the man, whatever his regret, and whatever his endeavour to repair the mischief, will never place himself where he might have stood, had he set himself to the duties that belong to its season. It is quite to be expected that such would be the case; for if, as we must believe, every period of life has its own appropriate occupations, and those

occupations leave no room for others; it necessarily follows, that he who is engaged at one period with the business which should have been completed in the former, must be always in arrears, and whilst recovering the past be neglectful of the present: and it is not probable that the duties of one period can be gathered into the duties of another season without omitting its own.

It is also clear that the ability changes with the period; and what we do not do at the right time, we want the strength to perform at any subsequent time. Thus the man who has not been well trained may apply himself to the repairing his defective education: but he still finds it intensely difficult to bring his mind into habits of attention; and there will be a kind of stiffness, if we may use the expression, in every muscle, which will almost forbid his bending it to the processes of study. So that just as there has been negligence in youth, the man must be wanting to the end of his days in acquirements of whose worth he is perpetually reminded, but which are not to be gained at any subsequent period of his life. And if it be true, that an idle and undisciplined boyhood, thus exerts a kind of paralyzing power in manhood, the defect of education refusing to be supplied, whatever the carefulness of later days, it assuredly must be admitted, that the faults of early life tell most injuriously upon the best endeavours of mature; that they do, as it were, so adhere to a man, that with all his striving he cannot quite part from them. In other words, that God causes them so to hamper and to press the individual, when convinced of his error and struggling to repair it, that he may be said to "write bitter things against himself;" and be "made to possess the iniquities of his youth."

We need hardly point out to you how this same truth is exemplified with reference to bodily health. The man who has injured his constitution by the excesses of youth, cannot repair the mischief by after abstinence and self-denial. The seeds of disease which have been sown while the passions were fresh and ungoverned, are not to be eradicated by the severest moral regimen which may be afterwards prescribed and followed. The man may become a virtuous man, and hold in utter abhorrence the vices of his days of debauchery; but he cannot, with all his sorrow and all his repentance, put from him the entailments of his dissoluteness. He must carry with him to the grave impaired energies and trembling limbs, and feel and exhibit the painful tokens of premature old age. And, indeed, whenever this occurs, our text finds an accurate illustration. Of the man, who, through years of strict and conscientious morality and temperance, is continually reminded by the sufferings which spring from a shattered constitution, that his youth was spent in voluptuousness—may it not be said that bitter things are written against him, and that, too, by God, who has appointed that punishment shall follow in the way of natural consequence upon sin; and may it not be said of such a man, that forasmuch as all his forsaken debauchery is yet cleaving to him in enfeebled powers and inveterate disease, may it not be said of him, that he is "made to possess the iniquities of his youth?"

But we only introduce these instances for the sake of making you understand the truth of our text. We think, indeed, that very much would be done if we could gain entrance for this truth as already exhibited, even if there were no more important respects in which it held good. It were a great thing if the boy could be stimulated to diligence and attention, by the view of the fruitless endeavours which he will probably make to repair idleness and neglect. It

were a great thing if the young man could be stopped in the career of dissipation by the view of the feebleness and maladies which he is storing up for after years. We speak of these as *great things*; not merely because mightily advantageous in themselves, as securing conscientiousness in the boy and abstinence in the youth, but because, in prevailing on an individual to look forward at all, we prevail on him in a degree to act on the principle of his immortality. The evil is, that present ease and present gratification are alone ordinarily consulted; and men live as though there were nothing in the future to be either dreaded or secured. If, therefore, we can bring them, at any stage of life, to act with reference to consequences, and to regulate their conduct, not by what may be agreeable at the moment, but by what will be beneficial in the long run, we feel that they are partially brought out from that moral degradation in which they are naturally sunk—the degradation of forgetfulness that they are not to perish with the brute: but having induced them to provide for a few years on earth, they are more accessible to remonstrances on the duty of providing for eternity.

But the possession of the iniquities of the youth which we wish most to exhibit, is that which affects men when stirred with anxiety for the soul, and desirous to seek and obtain the pardon of sin. We shall come best to a true view of this case by tracing the course of an individual who spends the best years of his life in neglect of God and the things of another world. It is not necessary that we suppose him one of the openly profligate. It is quite enough that he belong to that large mass of human kind, who, whilst moral and upright in conduct, make it not the great business of life to be ready for death. Such a man for many years may go on in his indifference and carelessness; and he may enjoy many pleasures, and he may amass much wealth, and gain much reputation. But as an immortal creature, appointed to survive the dissolution of matter, he is altogether an outcast and a beggar, and has no portion but with the heirs of everlasting shame. But things may occur which shall persuade this man of the necessity that he remember his Creator; and he may reach a point in life, often spoken of, when there have been stirrings of conscience, but as often deferred to a more convenient season, at which he pauses, and resolves that there must be repentance and turning to God. It is at this point we take him—a point at which, we are well aware, you all hope to arrive: for there are moments in the life of the most thoughtless amongst you when the oppressed immortality struggles so powerfully, and pleads so passionately, that the only mode in which it can be silenced is, that of promising that it shall be heard on some not distant day. And we now make the most favourable supposition for the procrastinating man. The likelihood is vastly on the side of his continuing to defer until overtaken by death: so that the iniquities of his youth will be possessed by him to the last; possessed in that apathy to spiritual impressions which is the produce of neglected means, of indulged passions, of resisted suggestions; possessed in that determination that *to-morrow* will be soon enough for preparation for eternity, and that *to-day* may yet be given to the enjoyments of time; which, first formed in the opening years of life, will ordinarily grow stronger as death comes nearer.

Now we make, as we have said, the most favourable supposition: there is yet time for repentance, and for seeking the Lord; the man has been roused

to a sense of his danger, and he is applying himself in good earnest to the discovery how it may be escaped. He will soon learn that, if sin is to be pardoned, it must be forsaken, and that a thorough change of conduct, the renouncing of what he most cherishes, and the following what is least congenial with his nature, are imperatively demanded of him if he would flee wrath to come. We would not imagine him deterred from the endeavour by its manifest difficulties; we will suppose that he goes boldly to the grappling of these difficulties: but then we say of the difficulties, formidable as they unquestionably are—too formidable to be overcome by unaided human strength—that they are mainly the result of the possession of the iniquities of his youth. The great battle which a man has to fight, when endeavouring to conform himself to the revealed will of God, is a battle with his own habits. Habits are the vehement opposers of the desired reformation: and the simple fact, that he has brought himself to sin as a matter of course, without deliberation, without difficulty, without repugnance—this is especially the millstone around his neck when he would rise from mortal things, and walk in newness of life. And what are habits but the possessed iniquities of his youth? It was in the spring-time of his days that he laid the foundation of those habits, which now, like iron ramparts, threaten to withstand effectually his escape from the bondage of corruption. It was at the very outset of his life that, by allowing full swing to his passions, putting little or no restraint on his desires, and deciding for the world in preference to God, he prepared the way for other enslavements from which it seems almost impossible to break loose. It would have been comparatively easy had he *resisted* at the first: but he *yielded* at the first; and every new compliance did but increase the facility of compliance, and therefore augmented the difficulty of resistance; until at last he settled into the man with the stupified conscience, in whom there was ordinarily no remonstrance against the doing wrong, in whom sin had no struggle for the mastery, and left no remorse for indulgence. And thus has the habit become a kind of nature; and the desperate resistance by which he feels himself met in his strivings to obey God—it is mainly the misdoings of his youth fallen on him in the being compelled to do evil.

We are not describing a case of extraordinary occurrence, but the case of every man who remembers not his Creator in the days of his youth. It is inevitable in regard to all such, that the indifference to religion which marked the commencement of their course, will adhere to them in later life as a powerful and inveterate habit. And we tell the young amongst you who may be calculating on its being as easy at one period as another to give attention to the things of eternity, that they leave out of question the singular but undeniable fact, that the carelessness of to-day adds itself to the carelessness of to-morrow; and that, beginning with attachment to this world, they bind themselves with a cord to which every hour will weave a new thread. It were comparatively little, so far as the probabilities of repentance are concerned, that a temptation should be yielded to in youth, if, after the yielding, the same moral position were occupied as before. The formidable thing is, that the yielding once is to clear the way for a succession of compliances, each made with greater readiness than the preceding; so that the single sin has a fatal power of propagating itself, and will re-appear ten, or twenty, or forty years after, in that shape which we have assigned it, with a confirmed, and scarcely

conquerable, habit. This it is which we define as being made to possess the iniquities of one's youth; and which we set before the young as most emphatical in its warning that they seek the Lord ere the evil days come. The grace of God may act on you in the maturity or decline of life, and prevail to the arresting you in the downward path of worldly-mindedness. We do indeed tremble for you; we cannot but tremble for you, if, deliberately reckoning on the chances of life, and the procrastinated strivings of the Spirit of God, you resolve on deferring what you hold it your duty to do. We tremble for you, because we know too well in what these purposed delays most frequently issue; and that thousands upon thousands, who might have gained entrance into heaven, had they only hearkened to early admonition, have gone down into the pit of the unbelieving, through daring to put off what they felt must at some time be done.

But nevertheless we own that your case is not hopeless. In nothing is God so wonderful as in his long-suffering; and you may yet be borne with—borne with in the vanities and gaieties of youth—borne with in the errors and indifference of riper years: and the day may come when disgust with a world which cannot satisfy, or startled by visions of another state of being, you will strive to throw off the service of sin, and prepare yourselves for the solemnities of death and judgment. And can you think that if this actually occurred, so that you entered into the invisible world without having sought pardon of the Mediator—can you think that you will be so circumstanced as though from the first you had taken part with the righteous; and that enjoying the earth's pleasures, and then securing the joys of heaven, you will then have the advantage over those who throughout have mortified the flesh with its corruptions and lusts? O, you little know what tyrants and task-masters you are arming against yourselves, in those habits which you thus deliberately resolve on forming. You little know how thoroughly you are providing that the days which are to be given to the stupendous work of securing happiness through eternity, shall be days of painful conflict, frequent defeat, uncertain hope, inconsiderable progress; and all because "the strong man armed" will have so long kept his goods in peace, that the endeavour to dispossess him, if finally successful, will to the last be fiercely withstood. But thus it must be: by beginning at once—now, whilst the conscience is not yet seared, and the sensibilities not blunted, and the passions, though in the fulness of their strength, not unmanageable through lengthened indulgence, you may, by God's grace, find the ways of wisdom to be ways of pleasantness, and enjoy the peace which passeth all understanding, take delight in obedience, and reach the gladdening and triumphant assurance, that nothing shall separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. You may gradually so subdue the evil nature, that in spite of the struggles of indwelling sin, you shall feel yourselves new creatures, and recognize that the work must be of God, and therefore cannot be overthrown. But if, on the contrary, you give God nothing but the dregs of life, O if we could then see you, we know we should find you complaining bitterly of the want of assurance; owning that it had become so natural to you to yield to temptation, that with all your vigilance you constantly yielded unawares; declaring, that at best you hung in doubt as to your final state, so feeble were your resolutions, so frequent your backslidings, so clouded your prospects. And if we could hear the ex-

clamations, wrung from you in solitude, when lamenting the habits which drew you to unrighteousness, we believe that they would be such as these: "Would that we had remembered thee, O God, in earlier days; for now thou writest bitter things against us, and makest us to possess the sins of our youth."

We would add to all this, that however genuine and effectual the repentance and faith of a late period in life, it is unavoidable that the remembrance of misspent years will embarrass those which you consecrate to God. Even with those who have begun early, it is a constant source of regret they began not earlier. What then shall be said of such as enter the vineyard at the tenth hour, or the eleventh, but that they must be haunted with the memory of prostrated powers, and scattered strength, and dissipated time; and that however laborious and self-denying through the few moments yet left on earth, they must sorrow poignantly and frequently over sins for which they can make no amends, wrongs which they cannot repair, and opportunities which they cannot recal, though now convinced of their wickedness and led to repentance. There are, perhaps, many whom their example has injured, whom they either taught or encouraged to do wrong: and of these many, some are already in the grave, having gone before them as witnesses to judgment; others are hardened in iniquity, and when warned of danger only laugh at being led different ways by the same guide. Will not this cause a continued and fearful remorse? Will it satisfy the man that he has escaped ruin himself, and that he shares not the perdition which he has been instrumental in bringing on others? And besides this, if the time spent in sin had been spent in God's service, how many might he have won from unrighteousness! How, in place of causing or accelerating their everlasting misery, might he have been privileged to instruct numbers in the faith, and to lead them to Christ as the way, the truth, and the life! Will not this, too, occasion constant, though fruitless regrets? Every encouragement given to irreligion or profligacy will be there as a possessed thing, not to be shaken off. Every witty saying, whose reward was in the plaudits of the mirthful company, and whose purport was the putting contempt on solemn and awful truths, will be there a possessed thing, not to be shaken off. Every lost opportunity of warning transgressors of the evil of their way; every blessing received from God's bounty, but not employed in his glory; every affliction sent in loving-kindness, but which tended not to repentance; every refusal to side with those striving to stem the torrent of iniquity—all will be there a possessed thing, not to be shaken off. They may all have been pardoned: that precious blood, which prevails to the taking away of every sin might have been applied to the prodigal who has returned after many years of wandering, so that he is washed and cleansed in God's sight: but they will live in the reproaches of conscience, when blotted out of the book of remembrance. And we again tell the young amongst you, that if they defer giving heed to the things of religion till the latter days of life, and are then in great mercy permitted to find place for repentance, all their indifference, and carelessness, and obduracy, cling to them with most powerful tenacity; so that, even when enabled to trust in Christ as a propitiation, they will be unable to throw from them the burden of remembered misdoings. Abused privileges which are not to be recalled—injuries wrought by an evil example, for which no equivalent can be offered—the countenance which has been afforded to unrighteousness—



these will assuredly hamper and harass them even when freely forgiven. Thus, will they not, however confident of a final entrance into heaven, will they not be frequently compelled, in their communings with God, to pour forth the pathetic complaint—"Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth?"

We would further observe, in order that we may afford yet one more motive to the young, that by lengthening the period of irreligion, and therefore diminishing that of obedience to God, we almost place ourselves amongst the last of the competitors for the kingdom of heaven. We are well assured that we shall be judged hereafter by our works, and that in proportion to our progress in piety will be the recompense we receive at the resurrection of the just. It must therefore follow, that if we devote but a fraction of our days in the striving for the reward promised to Christ's servants, there is an almost certainty that only the lowest of those rewards will come within our reach. We do not deny that he who starts late in the Christian race, may, by God's blessing on extraordinary earnestness, outstrip others who have been long, but tardily, pursuing the heaven-ward path. But such a case as this will be necessarily uncommon: for, if we have not exaggerated the possession of the iniquities of youth, it is evident, that he who begins to serve God in the decline of his days, begins at a vast disadvantage: he can expect to advance but slowly, to be often at a stand, and often driven back. He made his election at first for the pleasures of sin; and though he has been taught the folly of the choice, and graciously allowed to choose again, he may not hope to soar as high in happiness as though all along it had been his preference. So that the iniquities of youth will hang like lead on the wings of his soul, restraining its ascendings, and forbidding it reaching those loftier points in immortality which might have been attained by a longer striving. And though you may now think little of this, reckoning that so long as heaven be entered at all, it is comparatively indifferent what place is obtained, you may be sure that when the grace of God takes possession of the heart, it will infuse a holy ambition, and make you eager for the brighter crown and the richer heritage. In the days of your carelessness, you may be abundantly satisfied with being even the least in the kingdom; and indeed, we are unable to imagine the blessedness of the very least. (O, who shall measure the separation between the lowest of those who enter, and the highest of those who are shut out!) But in the days of your repentance and obedience, there will be, with every sense of the vast privilege of being even the least, a desire to press towards the mark, and to stand amongst those who shall be specially glorious at Christ's second appearing. And when you feel that the enjoyment of earthly pleasures has been purchased by the sacrifice of the nobler prize of eternity, and that the years in which you neglected God and served sin produce an effect on the countless joys of hereafter, both in diminished happiness, and a lower station, and feebler splendour; aye, when you perceive that all the actions of your past life, the indifference and rebellion, and especially at its outset, when you sowed the seeds of evil habits—that these are pressing upon you with a weight which keeps you down in the contest for the glories of the invisible world; and that this early conduct cleaves to you as a burden not to be thrown off, impeding your every effort as a candidate for the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; yea, we say, that then, whatever your present feelings, you will own mournfully, and with a bitter

feeling of self-reproach, that with the ability to soar high in everlasting majesty God has made you to possess the iniquities of your youth.

But we cannot dwell longer on the warning which our text furnishes to the young. We come now, in the last place, to remark, briefly, on **THE EXPLANATION WHICH IT AFFORDS OF PROCEEDINGS WHICH MIGHT OTHERWISE SEEM AT VARIANCE WITH GOD'S MORAL GOVERNMENT.** We are to consider that Job spoke what we may call matter of fact, whether or no he judged rightly in the view he took of his own case. Job was a righteous man; exemplary beyond any on earth in all that constitutes and adorns godliness: yet he supposed, that the grievous afflictions with which he had been visited, might be in recompense for the sins of early days, when he had not yet dedicated himself to God, or not with that entireness which the service demanded. But, at least, we have no right to suppose that the account proceeds on a wrong principle. We rather conclude the principle to have been correct, whatever might be said of the individual application. The principle is, that the sins which righteous men have committed during the season of alienation from God, are visited upon them in the season of repentance and faith; so that they are made to possess, in suffering and trouble, those iniquities which have been quite taken away, so far as their eternal penalties are concerned. We account the principle to be one of great importance, because men are apt to taunt Christianity with ministering encouragement to sin; just as though there were impunity to believers in Christ, whatever the offences they commit. It is in this way that the instance of David has furnished occasion of cavil and objection—the murderer and the idolater being supposed to escape without punishment, nothing being required but the simple acknowledgement of his crime. But there is a vast mistake in supposing that the righteous may sin with impunity. It certainly was not thus with David: David had grievously offended, and David grievously suffered. As the result of a genuine repentance he was indeed graciously forgiven, so that his name was not blotted out of the Lamb's book of life: but through the remainder of his days he was harassed with affliction in its worst possible shapes: family troubles and public feuds occasioned him continual disquiet: among his children there was rebellion, incest, murder; among his subjects, treason, famine, and pestilence: the sword departed not from his house, nor anguish from his heart. No one, we think, can read his history and deny, that through many years God wrote bitter things against David, and made him possess the iniquities of his youth.

And what was thus true in the case of David, we may believe to be also true with regard generally to the servants of God. It is a common observation, that more trouble falls to the lot of the righteous than the unrighteous; and it is the common explanation of this fact, that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Now we doubt not the correctness of this explanation, so far as it goes: but we cannot think, that the only end for which the righteous are distinguished in calamity is, that they may be disciplined for immortality. We remember what God said to the children of Israel by the mouth of the prophet Amos: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." It is evident he here makes the peculiar relationship in which his own people stood to him, the reason why their every offence should be visited. Had not the Israelites been selected from the earth's

families, it is implied, that in the present life, at least, they would have been rated to a less strict reckoning for misdoing. It was a thing necessarily to be observed, that sin lost nothing of its heinousness in God's sight, because it was committed by a nation on whom he had set his especial favour. What was hateful in his enemies was, if possible, still more hateful in his subjects; and, therefore, because Israel was first in privilege, must Israel be signal in punishment. In like manner we seem warranted in believing that peculiar trouble falls on the righteous, because they are righteous, and because, therefore, God's honour is intimately concerned in their being visited for transgression. The wicked who die in their wickedness will be punished at the judgment. There will be no need to appeal to what they suffered on earth, in proof that their wickedness was hateful in God's sight. They are to possess throughout eternity the iniquities of their youth; and all orders of intelligences will learn from their doom, that their iniquities, if not followed by any temporal chastisement, were not overlooked by the Governor of the universe.

But the case is very different with the righteous: they are to be acquitted through Christ's merits at the judgment, and assigned at once to the gladness of the purchased inheritance: there will be, therefore, no opportunity beyond the grave for the display in their case of God's hatred of sin, and the inflexible character of his retributive government. If God is to be shown as displeased with the iniquities of his own people, as well as of his enemies, it must be seen in this life: and hence we suppose it true that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth;" not only because chastening prepares for glory, and therefore proves love; but also because the chastening is a consequence of sin in those whom God loves: and therefore the consequences must be experienced on this side the grave. Never let it be thought that a dissolute youth and a profligate manhood escape with impunity, if succeeded by a righteous old age. If you entered thoroughly into the histories of individuals and families, we believe you would find, that where the earlier years have been given to sin, and the later to godliness, these later have been ordinarily years of disquiet and calamity: you will then have no room to wonder at the affliction which you have seen literally heaped on the righteous; and you will think there was something vastly more equitable in the distribution which gave the most grief to the most piety. But you have not kept in mind that there are special reasons why God should make the righteous to possess the iniquities of his youth. It is in these that we find our explanation of dealings which might otherwise seem opposed to an impartial moral government. We regard the extraordinary afflictions of good men as so many proofs that God takes note of their sins; and that though, when these sins are confessed, he is faithful and just to award their forgiveness, he is so resolved on demonstrating his hatred of evil, that he inflicts temporal penalties where he has remitted the eternal. "Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions," is David's account of God's dealings with Moses, and Aaron, and Samuel; and applies equally to those to which the righteous in our own day are subjected. And when we observe men of piety so visited of God, that all his billows and streams go over them—thwarted in their plans, spoiled of their comforts, sorrowing for their children; and contrast their state with that of irreligious men, with whom every thing seems to flourish—"they are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men"—we

do indeed think that we are viewing a discrepancy which will be adjusted at the final account of our race; but we also think that we behold the present actings of a retributive government, and that God is exhibiting in the righteous what he will hereafter exhibit in the unrighteous, so thorough a hatred of sin that he cannot let it go unpunished.

But we, for a moment, turn to that view of our text on which we have most desired to fix your attention; and again, in conclusion, entreat the young to remember their Creator, and not to forget that what may be done hereafter can never be so well done as now. If you continue the life of indifference to God, and attachment to the world, you will be unable, you perceive, to free yourselves from iniquities. Even if brought to repentance, those iniquities will cleave to you till you die, a burden, a grief, an impediment to piety, a drawback from final glory. We again tell you, that, even if secured against the fearful probability, that what is desired will never be performed, that to procrastinate leads to throwing away the soul, you would prove yourselves blind to your own interests, by deferring for a single day to renounce the world, and take part with the children of God. Every moment you still heap up remorse for the season of repentance, if that ever arrive; just as it does for the sinner a fiercer vengeance if the man dies unpardoned. When brought to consider your ways, you will be forced to live over again the days of your recklessness, and your voluptuousness, and your apathy: you must live them over again, inasmuch as you must possess the iniquities of your youth. But how deficient the life—how painful the possession of recalling seasons past amidst the blandishments of pleasure, the revels of mirth, the flatteries of the world, the hopes of ambition! So that on every calculation, you act as infatuated and irrational beings by putting off the obtaining the one thing needful. The probability is that what is deferred will never be done: for the funerals in our streets, how often are they the funerals of those who have perished in their prime! The certainty is, that if you repent, your religious course will be darkened by the memory of your irreligions. The days you give to God will be embittered by the recollection of those you gave to the world, and joys which are now within your reach be unattainable by your most earnest striving.

O that you would be wise, that you would consider this! We do not plead with you as desirous to make you exchange the cheerful for the melancholy and the sad, and the animating for the gloomy and the oppressive. Such may be your view of becoming religious; but there cannot be a more erroneous one. We ask you to exchange the unsatisfying for that which will satisfy—the unsubstantial for the solid—the transient for the enduring—pleasures which, alluring in the anticipation, disappoint in the enjoyment, for delights whose possession far out-does the promise—treasures which the rust corrupts, and the thief can steal, for an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that cannot fade away. Yes, it is for baubles which they despise when acquired, wealth which they account nothing when gained, gratifications which they can loathe as soon as possessed—that men sell their souls. And all we now entreat of the young is, that they will not in the spring-time of life strike this foul bargain. In the name of Him who made you, we beseech you at once to break away from the world, and give yourselves to prayer for the aids of the Holy Spirit, lest through eternity this be your fearful lament—“O God, thou writest bitter things against me, thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.”

## BEN-HADAD'S REPENTANCE A TYPE OF GODLY SORROW.

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REV. H. F. FELL, A.M.

TRINITY CHURCH, CLOUDESLEY SQUARE, ISLINGTON, FEB. 28, 1836

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“And his servants said unto him, behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life”—  
1 KINGS, xx. 31.

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THESE words contain one of the finest pictures of repentance in all the word of God, both as touching the nature and accompaniments of it, and the success of it with God.

The history from which our text is taken is this. Ben-hadad, king of Syria, without any provocation, from the mere pride of power, from the basest and most oppressive ambition, had begun unjustly and causelessly to wage war against the king of Israel. His army was so numerous that all Israel was but a mere handful of men compared with them. “The children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; while the Syrians filled the country.” But, notwithstanding this, the divine communication to the king of Israel, by the prophet, was, “Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.” The immediate and sure consequence was that Ben-hadad and his army were routed with an immense slaughter, and the remnant of those that escaped fled to Aphek, a city, for refuge, and there a wall fell down upon them, perhaps, miraculously and they perished under the ruins. Ben-hadad himself, forced to fly for his life, was reduced to the greatest extremity of distress and humiliation. He fled, and came into the city of Aphek, here he was not secure, and he hid himself in the inner chamber of a house; and yet here he was not secure.

How desolate and critical was the situation Ben-hadad was in! Far from his own land, cut off from those who could afford him succour; in the heart of an enemy's country, an enemy irritated by his wanton and injurious conduct, from whom he could expect no mercy, nothing but condign punishment on his being discovered. Great rewards, no doubt, had been offered for his apprehension; the most diligent and scrutinizing search would be made; and ere long he must be betrayed and perish. At this fearful juncture, his servants—the courtiers and attendants that were about him—said unto him, “Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life. So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, Is he yet alive? he is my brother. Now the men did diligently observe whether anything would come from him, and did hastily catch it: and

they said, Thy brother Ben-hadad. Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Ben-hadad came forth to him: and he caused him to come up into the chariot. And Ben-hadad said unto him, The cities which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away."

Now, my beloved brethren, what do we learn from this history? We ought to copy Ben-hadad's conduct; we are all, by our own confession, grievous sinners, miserable offenders against God; and we are worse by far than we suspect ourselves to be. We have rebelled against the hand that made us; we have carried it insolently against the King of heaven, despising his laws, trampling on his just authority, following the devices and desires of our own evil hearts. We have no plea wherewith to palliate the enmity of our hearts or the transgression of our lives. Ours is a wanton rebellion against our God, even as the assault of Ben-hadad upon the monarch of Israel was an unprovoked assault. Our rebellion, also, has reduced us to imminent difficulty and danger; the eternal welfare of our bodies and souls is at stake in consequence of our sins: for whoever fought against the Lord and prospered? We may fly to the inner chamber to conceal ourselves, and drown our convictions of our danger amongst the vanities and false companionships of this world: but the searching eye of Omniscience will ere long discover us in our retreat; his power drag us forth, and his inexorable justice consign us to our proper doom. "Be sure your sins will find you out."

What then shall we do? Is there no hope for us? Is God clean gone for ever? Has he forgotten to be gracious? Is there no method whereby to avert the wrath of a justly incensed God? Blessed be God, there is, and one of his own appointment. Here again, we are to look to Ben-hadad as our model. We are to go, with sackcloth upon our loins, and ropes upon our heads, to the king of Israel: that is, we are to cast ourselves before the Lord with unfeigned contrition, with self-loathing, with brokenness of heart, and implore with all the earnestness of prisoners, that, not for own sakes, but for his own covenant mercy's sake, he will pardon us, spare our souls, receive us back again to his favour, and enter into covenant and friendship with us, through his dearly beloved Son, Jesus Christ. And if we do this, in sincerity, and with full purpose of heart, we shall succeed as certainly as Ben-hadad did. Hear what Almighty God publishes in his word, touching the returning and repenting sinners: "Repent ye, and be converted, and your sins shall be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." O if we go to God, if we approach the mercy-seat, earnestly desirous of that favour, that saving grace, which up to this moment we disregarded, with the idea impressed upon our minds, "Peradventure he will save our lives," the Almighty will lend his ear to our supplication, and not send us away unblesed or unheard.

Again observe here, brethren, what it was that induced Ben-hadad to humble himself. What was the great constraining principle that actuated him to go and seek the king of Israel, that he might live? His servants said to him,

Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. He believed the current report that had reached their ears, and he

acted upon it. So when any soul can humble itself before God, so as to loathe its sins, and itself on account of them, and readily to resolve to make war against them, it must ordinarily be by the merciful interposition of God through Christ. This, my dear brethren, is absolutely essential to saving repentance. A man may think about God, and a man may study divine subjects, through fear of God's power and judgments: but in order to repent heartily and effectually the soul must have a glimpse of the goodness of God. Nothing will bend the proud heart of man, so as to humble it in the dust before God, but the perceiving that he is gracious and merciful: nothing will melt the stony heart of man, but the believing that the King of heaven is a merciful King. Yes, the goodness of God must in some measure pass before us; he must be loudly proclaimed in all the avenues of conscience, as "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sins." So long, dear brethren, as we conceive of our Maker through a misapprehension of his revealed word, as morose, vindictive, severe, arbitrary, because he is infinitely holy and infinitely just—so long as we behold him with apprehensions, horror, and prejudice, and dislike, there is no room for repentance in the soul: tremble before him we may, but sorrow before him, with deep, godly, and genuine repentance, we cannot. O, brethren, contemplate often the mercy of God. Let not your taking any view of him, however scriptural, obscure that benign attribute of goodness from your eyes. Mercy shines all around you. Observe the divine forbearance towards you, that you have been so long spared, and in having vouchsafed to you a period of mercy and grace. O, my fellow sinners, while you live in sin, you contend not only against the greatest and most powerful of beings, but against the best and most gracious.

Again, my brethren, observe another feature of the history. These people went to the king of Israel in the name of Ben-hadad, not only believing that he was a merciful king, but expressing their contrition, acknowledging, in fact, their most just condemnation, if it was his pleasure to be severe against them. They had not a shadow of an excuse to offer: Ben-hadad's conduct stood forth to view, in all its flagrancy and enormity; it admitted not of extenuation. Here again another property of godly repentance is represented to the very life. If you, my brethren, are saved, you must be enabled to act and feel precisely in this way towards God. Some men who have what they call repentance, dream (I can call it nothing else) that they do the Most High some service, and that he is in duty bound to save them for a few prayers, and a few little outward services. They are angry if their prayers are not attended to; they conceive imperfectly of their religious duties. They fancy they confer some favour, and that they outweigh all their defects in the grace of repentance. My brethren, Jehovah himself cannot (I speak in all humility)—Jehovah cannot accept our repentance, however sincere and unaffected our sorrow for sin, except through the person of Jesus Christ: how much less can he accept it, when it is repentance only in name, when it is not characterized by remorse, by self-loathing, and self-condemnation! The people before us, the nobles of the court of Syria, went with sackcloth on their loins and ropes on their heads, into the presence of the king of Israel, to shew that they viewed themselves in the light of criminals, justly condemned criminals by all laws, human and divine, going forth to execution. And if the king of Israel could not hearken in their prayers, and favour their request, they do not tax him with injustice; they had

not any apology against the stern mandate of the judge. There they were, dressed in the habit of condemned felons, ready to be executed. Now, though their demeanour was fitted to their circumstances, yet who will say that there was any obligation, any consideration imperatively binding on the part of Ahab, to spare Ben-hadad? True enough Ben-hadad's humiliation appeared genuine, and the tokens of it appeared very sincere and affecting. Yet Ben-hadad's former conduct was so outrageous, so audacious, and insolent, that Ahab would have been on all hands justified in putting it out of his power to do him or his kingdom any further injury. For what was his abasement? It made no reparation for the precious lives that had been lost in the conflict, or the desolation that had been spread through the territory of Israel. Exactly in the same manner there is no obligation on the part of Almighty God to the true penitent to save him. We can challenge nothing at God's hands, for we deserve nothing. What though we abase ourselves in the very dust, we can make no adequate recompense for the impiety with which we have insulted the most high God; for the time, the talents, and the faculties we have dissipated and lost; for the moral desolation which we have wrought in the world by our evil example. The least we can do is to be sorry, very sorry; but our sorrow does by no means bind the blessed God to save us.

Again, the moment these trembling petitioners came into the presence of the king of Israel, and mentioned the name of Ben-hadad as a suppliant, mark what followed. "What! is Ben-hadad yet alive?" said the king, "he is my brother." Can any language be more endearing, or any reception be more unexpected and gracious than this? But this is precisely the conduct of Almighty God to every returning sinner. What though you seem vile and loathsome in your own sight, will the great God reject you? Look at Ahab; shall man's goodness—and especially the goodness of such a man as that—eclipse God's goodness? Shall the king of Israel surpass the King of heaven? Shall he surpass him in mercy, in condescension, in goodness? Impossible! To you who have imbibed the spirit of Ben-hadad, the Almighty addresses these endearing words: "Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, and though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." Did the king of Israel call his penitent, humbled enemy his "brother?" So when we return to God through Christ, he not only pardons us our sins, but he binds us to him in the closest ties of affection and consanguinity. Yes, he adopts us into his family; he makes us "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ:" and hence the Holy Spirit teaches the children of God to cry, "Abba, Father;" hence it is said, he is not ashamed to be called our "brother."

Again; observe another feature in this history. Ben-hadad did not re-unite himself to the king of Israel, until he was assured of his friendly disposition towards him, and the king had sent and fetched him into his presence. So neither, brethren, can you come to a true repentance, to a just sense of your guilt and condemnation, until the Holy Spirit first work upon your heart. He must be the messenger, so to speak, between God and you, bearing witness to you of heavenly things, drawing, or inviting, you to God. It is his work; all the glory of it, from first to last, belongs to God. You cannot save yourselves; neither can you repent and become meet for salvation, without his agency upon you. O, it is very, very hard for flesh and blood, for the pride of corrupted nature to feel, that when it has humbled itself to the very uttermost before



God, he is still just even if he should withhold his mercy from us. Nay, it is impossible to mere flesh and blood, for the natural man cannot comprehend this sorrow and humiliation on account of sin, because he neither comprehends the holiness of God, nor the true nature of sin. Yet, brethren, this is repentance: God must "work in us." "Christ was anointed," remember, "to give *repentance*," as well as "remission of sins:" hereby shewing, that man cannot repent by his own natural ability. And herewith agrees the tenth article of our Church, which says, Man cannot by his own will "turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God." O, brethren, let me entreat you, therefore, to look up to God for help, praying to him in the language of our beautiful Litany, "That it may please him to give you true repentance," and for this end, "to endue you with the grace of his Holy Spirit, to amend your lives, according to his holy word."

Lastly, how did Ben-hadad act when he was accepted and forgiven all by the king of Israel? His grateful heart overflowed in language to this effect: "Ben-hadad said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria." He was ready, you observe, to do all he could in return for the unmerited, generous, and noble conduct of the king of Israel. He felt he could never repay him sufficiently for his goodness; but this was a specimen of his sense of the favour which he had received, and the clemency which had been manifested towards him. He was ready to restore all that he had unjustly taken from the king of Israel, and make compensation according to his ability. Now, dear brethren, this is a representation, an exact image of repentance in its effects on the soul: this is "repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of." The soul first believes the merciful disposition of God, and then ventures to approach him through the Mediator. True, the words of the Syrian shew his sense of his vileness and miserableness: but the moment the Spirit of God draws the soul (like the messengers that fetched Ben-hadad), and applies the blood of sprinkling to the conscience, it causes him to approach God no longer with a "peradventure he may save my soul," but boldly and confidently, because there is henceforth "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." And now, being overpowered with the magnificence of the divine goodness, the soul's great inquiry is, day by day, "What shall I render to the Lord? O let me restore what I have so iniquitously withheld. May thou be mine, O blessed Lord God, and may I be thine. O establish thy covenant with me, an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David: and let me be at peace."

Thus, my Christian brethren, do we see from the history of Ben-hadad what repentance is. And now go and examine whether you have ever repented at all after this sort. To repentance, and to do works meet for repentance, the ministers of God are directed to exhort you, as much as to believe the Gospel. Every thing tends to this. While you are impenitent your all is at stake; you are upon the brink of ruin. Beseech the Almighty Spirit of God, therefore, to give you repentance unto life. Seek him in all the appointed means of grace. Implore Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, to give you his mercy; and when you have obtained his mercy, which is better than life, he will rejoice over you as one that was lost and is found; he will call you his dear son, and array you with the temper and disposition of a son, and at last admit you to the sight and enjoyment of his holy and unspeakable kingdom. Amen.

## THE BEATITUDES \*.

REV. J. RUDGE, D.D., F.R.S.

T. SEPULCHRE'S CHURCH, SNOW HILL, OCTOBER 31, 1829.

\* And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him. And he opened his mouth, and taught them.—MATT. v. 1, 2.

IN that divine sermon, which immediately follows the words of the text, we have an abridgment of all religion, and morality. In this repository, we find a golden key with which we can unlock the gates of Paradise. We find a garden of delights, in which we may gather those beautiful flowers, that will deck the hidden man of the heart †. In this rich cabinet is contained the pearl of blessedness: and here is discovered the golden vessel, in which is deposited the celestial manna, that will feed and nourish the souls of believers unto everlasting life. In this most admirable discourse, we have the path, which leads to the heavenly mansions, most clearly pointed out; and the way which conducts to the Holy of holies, rendered acceptable to every one, who is pure in heart, and humble in spirit. Let it be our devout and hourly supplication, that, in this happy and blessed number, the Almighty God would grant, that each of us may finally be found, and “rejoice and be exceeding glad,” for those Beatitudes, which shall be our “reward” in the kingdom of heaven.

The Evangelist, St. Matthew, first a toll-gatherer, and afterwards a gatherer of strayed sheep to the flock and fold of the great “Shepherd and Bishop of souls,” having presented us with the history of Christ’s birth and lineage; having recorded the honours which were paid him by the wise men of the east, as well as the persecution, to which he was early exposed from Herod, who contemplated the babe “born in Bethlehem,” as a rival to the throne of Judea;—having informed us of his baptism by John, in Jordan, and of his temptation, by the devil, in the wilderness, with some subsequent transactions relating to this divine Teacher, proceeds to give us, in this, and in the two following chapters, a specimen of the sermons he preached, the doctrines he taught, and the morality which he enforced. The duties he enjoined, are weighty; and the rewards he promised, are glorious. Here we behold a Christian clothed with his white raiment of purity, and his scarlet robe of blessedness. Here we see mercy and truth meeting together, and mutually embracing each other: and here we behold the poor in spirit advanced to the honours and dignities of a kingdom; “their’s is the kingdom of heaven!”

\* Introductory to a Course of Sermons on the Beatitudes.

† I beg to mention with candour, and to record with gratitude, my obligations to an excellent writer on the same subject, the REV. THOMAS WATSON, to whom I am indebted for many of the views and thoughts with which this, and every subsequent sermon, is enriched.—J. R.

But it is not my design, at the present moment, to make any part of this most admirable sermon the subject of consideration. I am anxious to avail myself of this opportunity to suggest some remarks on the *character* of the preacher, and on the *occasion* of the discourse; and I am not without the hope, that the view of both the one and the other, with which I now intend to present you, in the *night*, will, by the *blessing* of God, be rendered seasonable and profitable to the "multitudes" now assembled in this large and beautiful place of worship, *where* He is still present to hear and receive the pious vows and the ardent supplications of his servants, "as may be most expedient for them." May I go forth in thy might, O God, and be as a sower of good seed only! and may the fruits of religion ever appear in the hearts and lives of the hearers!

First, we will consider our Lord in his character as a **PREACHER**. Who was the personage whose powers of eloquence were exhibited, and whose matchless words of wisdom were uttered on this occasion? It was no meaner a person than God's *chosen* "servant whom he upheld; his elect, in whom his soul delighted;" "on whom he put his Spirit, without measure, and anointed with the oil of gladness, above his fellows." It was the man, "who thought it no robbery to be equal with God," whom Jehovah "gave for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;" whom he commissioned "to open the eyes of the blind; to bring out the prisoners from the prison; and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." It was He, whose priesthood is eternal, whose doctrine "did drop as the rain; whose speech did distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." In fine, it was a *Preacher* "who spake as never man spake, and who, in every respect, was perfectly qualified for his ministry. Let us advert to a few of the gifts with which he was accomplished for this holy office.

He was an all-wise, and a most *enlightened* and *intelligent* preacher. In confirmation of this character, we have his own infallible testimony. He thus declares: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary\*." Yes, my brethren, this divine Teacher well knew *when* and *what* to speak, for the instruction of his scholars. He perfectly understood what doctrine was most suited to his hearers—what was most effectual to pierce the hearts of hardened sinners, to humble the proud and haughty, to comfort the mourning soul, to revive the drooping spirit, to confirm the wavering mind, and establish the true believers in their holy faith. We shall cease to wonder at these accomplishments and gifts of our divine Lord, when we consider, that he was thoroughly acquainted with the cases of all who attended on his ministry, that he saw distinctly into the darkest recesses of every heart, that all desires were made known, and no secrets could be kept hid from him! What a superior advantage did he possess above any of his successors in the ministry of the New Testament! We hardly know the faces of many of the congregation committed to our charge; far less can we know their hearts. We can hardly draw the Gospel-bow at a venture, and when done we must beseech Unerring Wisdom to direct *the arrow*! We may sow the seed: the Spirit alone can apply the word, and *give* the magnificent increase! Again,

\* Isaiah, l. 4.

Secondly, Jesus Christ was a most *powerful* and *affecting* preacher: he spoke to the consciences, as well as to the ears, of men. "He taught them as one having authority; and not as the Scribes." He could set their sins before them in the clearest light, and show them their own hearts in a point of view very different from that in which they had ever before beheld them. This power the woman of Samaria had experienced, when she left her water-pot and invited her neighbours to visit him, saying, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did:" her conclusion was natural; "Is not this the Christ?" His eloquence was accompanied with zeal, which caused it to lay hold on the consciences of men, and to touch the tenderest strings of the human heart. Like an impetuous torrent he carried all before him: he broke down the mounds and fences in which sin had entrenched itself. The force of his doctrine was irresistible. With his two-edged sword he could cut the heart of stone, and "pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." In short, "never man spake like this man," his enemies themselves being judges, and compelled, reluctantly, to make this admission. Such being the fact, the inference is irresistible, that,

Thirdly, He was a *successful* preacher, and a mighty converter of sinners from the evil of their ways. He who had "grace poured into his lips," could pour it into the hearts of his hearers, by which many, even "among the chief rulers, believed on him," as we read in the record of John; "nevertheless among the chief rulers, many believed on him." When he spoke, all was attention: when he blew the trumpet of the Gospel, even those who were most opposed to his doctrine, and questioned his claims, flocked to his standard. He had the hearts of all men in his power; when he opened them, none could obstruct the entrance of his Spirit, and the admission of his doctrine. A meek, a gentle reply could make an armed band of his enemies fall prostrate on the ground. A single look even could pierce the soul of a backslider, and reclaim an apostate disciple. Thus qualified, no wonder that the pleasure of the Lord prospered in his hand! I may likewise observe,

Fourthly, that Jesus Christ was a *lawful* and *authorized* preacher. He had his unction from the Holy One: and his Father, who sent him, bore witness to the validity of his commission. Although the fulness of the godhead dwelt in him bodily, yet, before he entered on his ministerial, as well as his mediatorial office, it behoved him to be sealed and solemnly inaugurated. Christ was "anointed to preach good tidings to the meek: he was sent to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." And if the great High Priest of our profession was anointed, and sent to preach the Gospel, surely his ministering servants, in imitation of their Master, ought to be regularly commissioned and set apart for their sacred office.

If so, then great is the arrogance of those self-created teachers, who, under the pretence of a commission to desert the anvil and the loom for the spiritual benefit of their brethren, usurp the sacred functions, and take upon themselves the work of the ministry without any warrant from those, to whom the legitimate authority has been delegated by an apostolic Church. How could we

reasonably hope for a blessing on the labours of the priesthood, were we to insult the Author of the only true and heavenly wisdom by selecting for his service those whom human science is conceived to have frowned upon and rejected? How could we expect that there should be "strength and beauty in the sanctuary," if it were to be thought of only as an asylum for all, who are regarded by their friends, as the "mere despair" of all generous discipline and instruction? St. Paul, in contemplating the awful importance of his ministry, exclaims, "Who is sufficient for these things?" They, therefore, can be but little conversant with the spirit and temper of St. Paul, who should return for answer to this solemn question, "We conclude them to be sufficient for these things, who have shown but little symptoms of sufficiency for any other study or pursuit." "No man," says St. Austin, "ought to preach publicly in the church, unless properly called thereto." But for this opinion we have much greater authority than this respectable father of the church. The learned apostle of the Gentiles expressly says, "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." As the supreme Head of the church gave "prophets and apostles," whose accomplishments were miraculously conferred, so he also "gave pastors and teachers," who were consecrated, and initiated into their office, in a more common and ordinary way. And if the ordination of ministers was necessary in the days of the apostles, it cannot certainly be less so in our times, when those extraordinary gifts, which were then in the church, have ceased. What inspiration did in former times, education and learning must, in a much less perfect degree, do for the successors of the apostles, and the work of the ministry must now be performed by the ordinary energies of the human mind, trained and strengthened by regular discipline, and assisted by the blessing and Spirit of Almighty God.

In the body natural, God has appointed to every member its proper and peculiar office: the eye to see, the tongue to speak, the ear to hear, the hand to work, and the foot to walk: so in his church, or body spiritual, he has made a distinction between its members—the *pastors*, and the *people*. It is expressly to the elders, or ministers, that the apostle St. Peter gives the charge, "The elders, which are among you, I exhort." "Feed the flock of God, which is among you &c." But where would be the flock if all were shepherds? For, with as much reason, as one man may take upon himself the office of a minister, all men might; then, where would be the distinction? and where would be that order in human society, of which the Almighty has furnished such striking and beautiful instances in all the works of his hand, and in all the operations of nature.

The universal Parent of all is a God of order, and to every member of his family has assigned his appropriate work and distinctive employment. To his servants who minister in his sanctuary he has given this charge, which peculiarly belongs to them, and to them alone. "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them &c." Surely the Apostle does not here speak to every man indifferently. He does not command the tradesman to leave the desk, nor the mechanic to throw by his tools—to abandon the occupations to which they have been bred and for which they are properly qualified, and "give themselves wholly to exhortation and doctrine." No: he speaks to Timothy, and, by him, to a<sup>†</sup>

\* Vid. Ezek. xxxiv. 2, &c.

† 1 Pet. v. 1. 2.

‡ 2 Tim. iv. 13, 15.

who are set apart for the work of the ministry, "by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery\*." As none might presume to touch the ark but the priests, so none but such to whom this privilege was given, have a right to intermeddle with the work of the sanctuary.

I do not deny that there are some men, whose natural gifts are so great, and whose intellectual attainments are so rich, as that they may justly compete with the acquirements, and even surpass the qualifications of many in the ministry. But, then, there is a wide difference between a man being *gifted* and his being *sent*. If this distinction were not to obtain, why should the apostle say, "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" Were gifts sufficient to constitute a minister, the proper language of St. Paul should have been, "How can they preach, except they be gifted?" The poorest citizen of this great metropolis may possess greater talents and gifts, than the individual who fills the elevated post of chief magistrate; but to that high office he must not aspire, unless he be the object of the selection and appointment of his fellow-citizens. The duties of the chair can alone be fulfilled by him, who has been chosen by the suffrages of the people, or the proper authorities of the land. And the same argument applies to other professions of life, and departments of state. The professional man, to whom has been entrusted the conduct of his client's cause, may possess greater legal knowledge, and more splendid endowments, than the individual who is clothed with the venerable office of a judge in any of our courts of law; yet he can neither sit in the seat, nor pronounce the decision of that highly esteemed character, unless he has received a commission to occupy the one, and adjudicate the other. And if it be thus in civil matters, much rather should the same course be adopted, and the same regularity and order be observed in things sacred, which are not of temporary, but of eternal importance. Those, therefore, who take upon them the work of the ministry without having a regular call and appointment from constituted authority, show more pride than zeal, more arrogance than humility. Of such may not God say, "I sent them not, nor commended them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all." They certainly act out of their sphere, and, too often, by "their false dreams, cause the people of the Lord to err." I have ever thought, that there has not been one more productive source of error and confusion to the church of Christ, than this abdication on the part of men of their peculiar sphere and profession of life, and their intemperate and injudicious interference with callings and offices, for which neither previous study, nor natural taste, nor accustomed habits, had duly disciplined and qualified them. Hence has unity of spirit been broken, and the bonds of peace been violated in society, and those who have professed and called themselves Christians have not been led into the way of truth, nor holden the faith in simplicity of mind, or in righteousness of life.

Having said so much concerning the character of the *Preacher* of this admirable sermon, it is now proper to advert, in the second place, to **THE OCCASION** on which it was preached. Of this we are informed in these words: "And seeing the multitude, he went up into a mountain." This may be considered as the pulpit, from which Christ chose to preach the doctrines of salvation, and address the numerous hearers, who thronged his person, and attended his

\* 1 Tim. iv. 14.

ministry. The place from which he spoke was, in every respect, convenient for hearing, and commanded an extensive view of the dense mass beneath and before him. And here we cannot fail to remark the striking similarity between the promulgation of the law and the Gospel. Both were published from a mountain; the one from mount Sinai, and the other from mount Tabor\*.

On this occasion, we find that the people were desirous to hear the "gracious words" that proceeded out of the heavenly Preacher's "mouth," and that he was no less willing to instruct them in the true knowledge of God, and in the saving truths and duties of religion. He always went about doing good, and suffered no opportunity to pass without relieving the pressing wants of the body, and the more desperate maladies of the soul. In the strictest sense he appeared to both in the character of a physician; each were objects of his compassion, but especially the soul, overspread with the leprosy of sin, and pining away under the ravages of some spiritual inveterate disease. Thus he exercised himself, not only for the benefit and comfort of his hearers, but likewise for an example to all who, in future ages, should be ordained to be preachers of his word, and publishers of the glad tidings of his salvation.

From the conduct of our divine Master we may learn, that it is the duty of every preacher of the Gospel to imitate the pattern which he hath set before them, and to embrace every opportunity of doing good to the souls of men. It is the work to which they are called, and the business in which they are employed. Christ has appointed them his ambassadors to negotiate for the peace and happiness of the human soul; and when a day of audience is appointed them, they should boldly execute the commission with which they are entrusted, and impartially declare the will of the Sovereign, whose person they represent. No exertion should be wanting, on their parts, to aggrandise the interests, and promote the honour and glory of his kingdom. The work on which the Prince of Peace sends his ministering servants, is, of all others, the most noble and the most interesting; none can exceed it in dignity, none surpass it in importance: viz., it concerns the salvation of precious souls. Nothing on earth is of equal value with the soul of man: its origin is divine; the operations of its powers and faculties are wonderful; and its duration is eternal. It is a perennial, or everlasting flower, which only buds on earth; but which expands its blossom, and comes to its full beauty and perfection in the garden and paradise of God above. Yea, in such estimation is it holden by him by whom it was created, that he declares it more valuable than the whole world; and asks, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

But, if the souls of men are of such incalculable value, and if, at the same time, they are in the greatest danger of being lost and ruined for ever, then with what indefatigable zeal and earnestness should these persons apply their every energy of mind and body to save them from destruction, whom God hath set apart for that purpose, and provided with the means of securing their salvation? If the Son of God poured out his precious blood to save them from perishing, why should his ministers be sparing of their exertions? Why not put in requisition every faculty, with which they are gifted, and undergo even every deprivation, and personal inconvenience, to which men can be subjected,

\* Such is the opinion of many learned commentators, both in ancient and modern times.

to be fellow-workers with their heavenly Master in the great and mighty purpose of saving from perdition the souls of their brethren? To study, to pray to preach, is their peculiar department of duty, is that which constitutes the sacred object of their ambition, and the sole end of their being. In this they are to be instant in season, and out of season. When they see the multitude, like Peter, they should let down the Gospel-net, in order that, as he did, they may catch thousands of precious souls. If successful, how glorious their reward! if not, they have done their duty; and they have the language of the prophet wherewith they may cheer their spirits, and amply recompense their toils; however inadequate may be their earthly remuneration, they have "delivered their own souls."

In this holy and blessed work, care and activity are the more necessary, as there are so many emissaries of Satan on the watch to entangle, to ensnare, and finally to ruin our invaluable souls. In the exact ratio of their desperate malice and repeated assaults, should be the zeal and vigilance of the spiritual watchmen to foil their efforts and defeat their machinations. What wiles—what stratagems, does the cunning serpent employ to wreak his vengeance on man, whom he regards as his supplanter in the favours and rewards of heaven! And, when artifice and deceit fail to accomplish his murderous purposes, then what floods of water—what floods of persecution, of heresy, and error, does the dragon throw out of his mouth to destroy the woman and her seed!

To counteract these efforts of the devil, and to arrest the march and prevalence of these errors, should be the unceasing endeavour of every watchman of the house of Israel. He should apply a spiritual antidote to every poison which has infected, to every sin which has beset, and to every disease which rages among the people. That to which all his might and energy should be mainly applied, is to "convert sinners from the errors of their ways, and save their souls from death." The ministers of the Gospel are not only *pastors*, chosen to feed the flock of Christ, they are also *soldiers* enlisted to fight his battles and defend his cause. While, with the one hand, they hold out the bread and water of life to those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness; with the other, they are to wield the sword of the Spirit, and manfully to engage in personal combat with all, who attempt to deface the beauty, destroy the simplicity, and corrupt the purity, of our holy religion.

Besides the errors and heresies which have sprung up in the Christian church, which are as so many weeds and tares impairing the growth, and impeding the march, of sound scriptural truth and doctrine, there are other obstructions and hinderances with which the ministers of God have to grapple in their pious endeavours to sow the precious seed of the Gospel in the hearts of the people. Among the various classes of hearers, to whom the spiritual husbandman addresses himself, as a sower going forth to sow, some there are, who are dull and slow of understanding; others possess such defective memories, that the impression is soon obliterated, of whatever saving truth they heard, and of whatever instructive view they entertained. "The sincere milk of the word" produces no wholesome and invigorating effect upon others; they loathe it; and consequently, it contributes not to their growth, nor increases their strength in the most important of all hopes, the spiritual one. Upon such a soil, no seed can vegetate, and no fruit be brought to perfection. The endeavour of Christ's ministers should here be specially applied to remove these obstructions, and



rectify these deficiencies, as far as possible; and every effort should be used to brighten the powers of the understanding of the dull, to strengthen the memories of the defective, and to render the preaching of the word acceptable, and the sowing of the seed profitable, by the meekness of wisdom with which we recommend, and the simplicity and earnestness of manner with which we enforce it on the hearts and acceptance of our hearers. How much of "the good seed of the word" is lost, by falling on the way-side, and on stony-ground hearers, from whom the devil, "that fowl of the air," picks it up, and thereby prevents it from being fruitful. Of how many sacred truths has this plunderer robbed the hearers of the Gospel! And how many edifying sermons has he stolen from their hearts, which, in the season of adversity, and at the hour of death, might have proved refreshing cordials to their departing spirits!

But if the memories of some hearers are so defective, that they are in danger of having the word they have heard quickly eradicated from their minds and of losing it altogether, it behoves the ministers of Christ to ascend the preacher's mount the more frequently, in order that some of the leading truths of the Gospel may, at last, gain a strong ascendancy, and produce a lasting impression upon them. Repeated ascents should be made to the spiritual mount, and persevering efforts to prepare and manure the soil, that it may be rendered fit to receive and retain the precious seed which is sown. Should the hearts of those, upon whom this care is bestowed, be as hard even as adamant, yet the sower must not remit his toils, nor fail to scatter the seed of the word upon them; seeing that, even of these stones, God is able to raise up children unto himself. As the hard and parched glebe requires a succession of showers before it is softened and fertilized, so the hearts of sinners, scorched and hardened by the burning heat of sinful passions, require "precept upon precept, and line upon line:" yea, our doctrine "must drop on them as the rain; our speech must distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass," before they are softened, and rendered capable of bearing fruit unto hoiness.

Besides these defects, above mentioned, in the understanding, in the memory, and in the hearts of hearers, by which the success of the Gospel is greatly impeded, there is another grievous obstruction, to which it is necessary to allude. This obstruction arises from the ear, which prevents them from hearing the word preached so as to make any visible impression. "In hearing, they hear not." This impediment is occasioned by having the passage to the organs of hearing choked up with the mud or thick clay of the earth. They do indeed frequent the temple of the Lord; and "they come unto thee," saith God to his prophet, "as the people cometh; and they sit before thee as my people; and they hear thy words, but will not do them: for with their mouth, they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo! thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words but do them not\*." They hear the sound, but regard not what is said. The consequence is, that the most impressive and judicious sermon produces no other effect, than "a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." How many, at the very time in which their attention should be rivetted to the most momentous subjects upon which they are addressed, remain passive and unaffected hearers, and scarcely know one word

\* Ezekiel, xxxiii. 31, 32.

of what the preacher has been pressing on their hearts, and enforcing on their thoughts. Whence does this arise? Alas! the reason is too obvious. The house of prayer is desecrated as a house of merchandise, and the things of time occupy the thoughts of those, whose minds should be set on the things of eternity. Ah! say whether this be not the truth, and whether, "how ye may buy, and how ye may sell, and how ye may get gain," do not too frequently intrude and close the heart against all present impressions, and all profitable views of God and eternity! You should take the scourge, brethren, and like the Redeemer, whip this offending traffic from the house of your God, and from the temple of your hearts! In such a case, when your hearts are thus diverted from the only legitimate purpose for which you should resort to the house of prayer, when the soil of your minds is thus in a state in which no precious fruits can spring up and ripen to maturity, what must the ministers of the word do? They must ascend the mount; and, as they are styled "Boanerges," or sons of thunder, they must "cry aloud, and spare not:" they must "lift up their voice like a trumpet, and show the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins," in order that the deaf ear may thereby be unstopped, that it may hear what "the spirit saith unto the churches," and that the word of life may find entrance to the conviction of the mind, and the salvation of the soul.

To all these duties, those who live by the altar, and minister in the sanctuary are called; and they ought to perform them faithfully, not only for their master's glory, but for their own comfort and advantage. What cause of triumph, and what source of joy is it to him, who serveth in the temple, who, when called upon to give account of his stewardship, can thus address his heavenly Master, "Lord! I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do!" "Behold, I, and the children whom thou hast given me!" If the angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, what must be the joy of a faithful minister of Christ when he is admitted to the mansions of glory, and there recognizes those happy souls whom God, by his instrumentality, hath brought into his heavenly kingdom? Every sinner, whom he has been the means of turning from the evil of his ways, shall add a jewel to his crown. Yes, my brethren, "they that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever\*." But even, "though Israel be not gathered, yet shall they be glorious in the eyes of the Lord†." Let these animating and encouraging declarations have their full and sober influence on the mind, and constrain those who labour in word and doctrine to imitate the blessed example in the text, that, through grace, they may bring many of Christ's wandering sheep home to his fold.

Our blessed Lord and Master availed himself of every occasion to preach, to instruct the ignorant, and to enlighten them that were out of the way. Sometimes he taught in the temple; sometimes in a ship; at other times, as in the text, on a mount. In every place he could find a chair from which he could teach those who attended him. How often did he endure hunger and thirst, in order that he might feed others with the bread and water of life. His solicitude was more for others than for himself: and his own personal conveniences were sacrificed, when a perishing soul was to be saved, and a wretched

\* Dan. xii. 3.

† Isa. xlix. 5.

object to be relieved. Let his ministers possess this mind, and follow this example, of their divine Lord, and lose no opportunity of doing good in every department of life, and in every case of distress. In travelling to heaven, let them be as shining lights to conduct others thither also: knowing that they shall be to them a crown of joy and rejoicing in the day of the Lord. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

But if it be the duty of Christ's ministers to preach the Gospel in season, and out of season, and to let no opportunity pass of edifying the souls, and of spiritualizing the views of those committed to their charge, it is no less incumbent on those, who attend their ministry, to embrace every opportunity of hearing the Gospel which is preached. In the Gospel, heaven and salvation are freely offered unto you, Christian hearers! It is the field in which "the pearl of great price" is hidden: it is the well of salvation, from which only you can draw the living water. How marvellous! that poor, guilty, and dying sinners should so undervalue it, and come so seldom to the place, in which the blessings therein promised are to be obtained! One would imagine, that the sanctuary of God would be thronged and crowded, like doves to their windows; that there would be multitudes of souls, naturally dark and ignorant, lying at the posts of Wisdom's doors, and seeking for instruction in the courts of the Lord's house; that there would be such numbers of blind, of halt, of withered, lying in the porches of Bethesda, waiting for the moving of the water, as that room would be wanting to contain the guests, and accommodate the poor lying at the porch of the temple. But, alas! how few desire to be spiritually enlightened! How small the proportion between those, who are sensible of the maladies of their souls, and those who think themselves whole; and who, in consequence, come not to the divine Physician for healing, nor to the waters of the sanctuary to be cleansed of their sins, and made whole of their infirmities.

It should be the duty of Christian readers to afford the utmost encouragement to their ministers, to strengthen their hands, and to cheer their labours; and in no way can they fulfil this duty more effectually, than by profiting under their ministrations of love, and their offices of kindness. It behoves "those that be planted in the house of the Lord, to flourish in the courts of our God," and to bear much fruit. Such as feed in the green pastures of Gospel ordinances should become sound in health, and vigorous in intellect. And now, my Christian hearers, can this wholesome state be better produced, and this blessed encouragement be better given, than by letting your ministers see "of the travail of their souls" in your new-birth, in your growing in grace, and in your advancing daily towards the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus!

There is another method in which you should give encouragement to those who labour in the word and doctrine. The work in which they are engaged, is one of no common difficulty and embarrassment, of which few have any idea; but there is a way in which their toils may be lightened, and their course rendered easier and delightful; and that is by your earnest prayers, that Almighty God would strengthen them for their arduous work; that he would carry them through all their difficulties, and make them wise in their holy endeavours of winning souls. So great did the work of the ministry

appear to the learned apostle of the Gentiles, that in contemplating its awful importance, he exclaimed, "Who is sufficient for these things?" To a question so solemn, they would be but little conversant with the spirit and temper of St. Paul, who should return for answer, "We conclude them to be sufficient for these things, who have shewn but little symptoms of sufficiency for any other study or pursuit." Though fully replenished with the graces of the Spirit, yet he earnestly entreated the prayers of his Christian converts. And if he, who had such superior revelations, who was not educated, but inspired for the ministry: if he needed the assistance of their prayers, much more do we stand in need of them; we who, in comparison with the apostle, in his gifts and accomplishments, are but as very dwarfs, and can pretend to no such revelations as those for which he was pre-eminently distinguished.

Pray, then, for your ministers, ye hearers of the word! pray that in the strength of God they may go forth to their work; pray that he may lead them to the most suitable and the most necessary subjects; that he may give them "the tongue of the learned," and knowledge "how to speak a word in season to him that is weary," and that they may be the blessed means of bringing many sons and daughters unto glory. Pray that God will accompany their labours with his blessing, else will all their toils be in vain, and their endeavours to catch men in the net of the Gospel be profitless and as nought. It is the kindly influence of the sun, of the dew, and of the rain, which causeth the seed sown in the earth to germinate, to grow up, and come to a plentiful harvest, and not the hand of the sower. It is of Paul to plant, but of God to give the increase. In like manner, it is not our preaching, but the influence of the Holy Spirit, which causeth grace to grow in the hearts of men, and to bring forth fruit unto everlasting life. We are the instrument, but the hand is his. Pray we that he will hold and direct it. If you think your ministers heavy, cold, and lifeless in their preaching, try to brighten and arouse them by your prayers. A praying people will always have successful ministers. And I am mightily afraid, that to the want of their people's prayers, no small degree of the want of success in their ministerial labours is to be attributed; and that the Gospel of Christ is so seldom the savour of life unto life to those who attend our ministry. Therefore, "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified." "And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ," to whom be glory for ever and ever Amen

## CHRIST ALONE TO BE PREACHED.

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REV. S. F. RAMSEY, B.A.

ST. MICHAEL'S CHAPEL, BURLEIGH STREET, STRAND, MARCH 6, 1836.

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“He preached unto them Jesus.”—ACTS, xvii. 18.

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WE are told that all scripture is profitable for instruction in righteousness and for doctrine; but the writings and sermons of Paul are, in truth, emphatically so. The great apostle of the Gentiles was indeed a pattern to Christians in general, to Ministers in particular. In him we behold the most undaunted courage combined with caution, zeal with prudence, firmness with wisdom. He was distinguished for piety and unshaken fortitude; for a burning, overpowering, Demosthenic eloquence: but with that towering eloquence and gigantic intellect, we find associated the deepest humility, and the most unfeigned self-abasement. There was an honesty of purpose in Paul that carried conviction to the breasts of the bystanders, that he was sincere in what he uttered; the unlearned stood amazed at his energy and fervour; the learned were captivated by the eloquence of his diction, the culture of his mind, and the aptness of his allusions.

O what a preacher was Paul! What dwarfs are we of the present day when put in comparison with that eminent man of God! From the hour of his spiritual birth, to the day of his ignominious and cruel death, he never deviated from the Zionward path; never swerved from that course which pointed to the accursed tree, on which the Redeemer of mankind was suspended. But although we feel as a very atom when compared to that colossal mind, yet we trust that we forget not we have the same Master to serve, the interests of the same God to advance, that we have the promised aid of the same Spirit in preaching the words of eternal life. Yes, even Paul would never have impressed one heart, never have caused the captive sinner to burst the bonds in which he was enchained; yea, never have converted one soul to God, had he not received power from Jehovah to accomplish the mighty task. Yes, my brethren, the God with whom we have to do, is pleased to bring about the most glorious results by the most insignificant means—deeds of heavenly prowess by the weakest, the feeblest instruments; and therefore it is why we faint not. Yes, who shall dare to say, who will venture to aver, that the word this morning spoken, the message now delivered, shall pass unheeded by, shall be attended without any beneficial effects? Who can tell but this very morning, aye this very hour, he who now addresses you, may be the honoured instrument in the hand of Deity, of bringing some wandering, lost sheep into the fold of the Great Shepherd, be the means of removing the film from off

the spiritual vision of some trembling sinner, so that he shall be enabled to see Him who is invisible to human ken? God grant that such may be the case! O thou ever blessed Spirit of truth and consolation, come down from the mansions of thy abode; come tabernacle in our breast, erect thy tent within our heart; infuse thy holy influences into our whole soul; and dwell and abide with us for ever! We ask not for the eloquence of Paul, we ask not for the mere tinsel of human rhetoric; nor the trappings of earthly ornament; we ask not for these; we only ask for Thee, the Spirit of the Lord, to have our hearts inflated, our affections expanded by thee, that we may be enabled to impart unto those around us some portion of thy divine influence, and cause the bosoms of our hearers to imbibe that sacred unction which we now supplicate to moisten, to bedew, and to thaw our own withered feelings, our own frozen affections!

"He preached unto them Jesus." Almost, methinks, I behold this great apostle of Jesus on his arrival at the seat of learning and of science, pacing the streets, beholding the achievements and the monuments of art; walking amid their sacred groves, and gazing on the relics of the mighty dead. Methinks I could almost enter into the mingled feelings of the man of God as he traversed through this mighty city. Like his Master he would drop the tear of commiseration and of pity, when he witnessed such a prostration of the intellectual powers, and saw that the mind and faculties of man when advanced to the highest pitch of mental acquirement and refinement of intellect, when civilization had received its last polish; that in matters of eternal moment, when left to himself, a murky dimness of vision seemed to brood o'er his spirit, and his understanding enshrouded in the thick folds of a darkness that might be felt. When he visited their halls of science, and witnessed their aptitude in penetrating the deep mysteries of nature; and observed with what eagerness they traced these labyrinths, and with what nicety they marked each avenue that led to the vista of knowledge, and at the same time perceived they were surrounded with gods wrought by their own hands; that with all their intelligence, and liberty, and knowledge, they bowed the knee to stocks and stones; he would be more deeply than ever convinced, that man when left to himself, is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil; that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Burke says, "Man is a religious animal:" he would have spoken more correctly had he said, "Man is a superstitious animal!" Surely we should blush for human nature when we cast our eye upon this mighty city; the emporium of intellect, the favorite abode of oratory, the school of philosophy, the resort of science, the receptacle of all that was great and noble, the patroness of the arts, the strong hold of freedom, whose armies empurpled the embattled plain with the gore of their numerous foes, whose ranks never received a wound but in the front, whose commanders, by their very name, caused a sudden chill to creep athwart the breast of their enemies; whose navies had only to sail forth from Piræus to strike dismay into the galleys of their opponents, and, like our own, were proclaimed the mistress of the seas. O surely we must see that man, even when advanced to the very acme of mental culture and civilization, is still as ignorant of God and the appropriate way of coming unto the mercy-seat as the brutes that

perish; that he knows no more how to worship God in an acceptable manner than the babe that is unborn. My brethren, this is a humiliating truth, but it is a truth, a truth of the utmost importance, to be impressed upon each of our minds; and it should induce us to sit at the feet of Him who spake as never man spake; and be taught that if man would be wise, he must become a fool that he may be wise! that "the world by wisdom knows not God," and the Athenians "professing themselves to be wise, became fools!"

But let us observe how Paul conducted himself whilst he sojourned at Athens. Did he occupy his time in admiring their statuary and architectural buildings for which they were so celebrated? Did he arrest his steps as he passed by the almost breathing marble? Did he tarry as he gazed upon the canvass apparently glowing with vitality? Did he consume his precious hours in examining the archives of the State? Did he make himself acquainted with the laws of Solon? No! What did he then? "He preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection." He knew that there was an energy, a vitality in that word, which would prove to be "the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also unto the Greek." And we are fully convinced that the plain, simple preaching of Jesus Christ and him crucified, will produce a greater effect upon the minds of men, than all the disquisitions upon ethics that ever were penned. The ancient philosophers, who, in general, were possessed of too much sense to worship images of gods far inferior to themselves, and who in their schools taught the purest morality then known, what did they effect? Did they cause a moral revolution in the world? Did they make such an impression upon the minds of their hearers, especially those in the more humble walks of life, as to induce them to cast their idols of wood and stone to the moles and to the bats? And, having thus far enlightened their minds, did the philosophers of the olden time conduct these their votaries, from the dark, dense mazes of superstition and of crime, into the pure, bright atmosphere of day, and there teach them to worship the God of nature? Did they effect even this change? No! With all their learning and diligence, they left the great bulk of mankind in the same benighted state in which they found them. Did these men of genius and of undoubted great mental acquirement, did they promulgate the doctrine of the immortality of the soul? No, they did not; it was one *right guess* among many *wrong ones*.

Thus then, brethren, we perceive that man in his best estate, when polished by civilization, enlightened by knowledge, and encompassed by all the refinements of life, is in a state of alienation from God, and is a mournful exhibition, not of the dignity, but of the awful depravity of human nature: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

Let us observe the conduct of Paul on his arrival at this celebrated seat of learning. We are told that "whilst Paul waited for Silas and Timotheus at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? Other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection." We find the spirit of Paul, on his arrival at Athens, was stirred

within him when he found that the city was wholly given unto idolatry. No doubt indignation, mingled with pity, would pervade his mind, when he witnessed such a prostration of intellect, rendered still more conspicuous by the high station the Athenians occupied in the world of letters. As the lightning's flash emits a more ~~and~~ glare from the black darkness with which it is enveloped; as the beacon's light is more brilliant during the hours of night than at the dawn of day; so, in like manner, the temples of idolatry strike more forcibly the mind when enshrined by intellect and learning, and their altars bestrewed and smoking with the immolations of genius, than when ensconced ~~oer~~ ~~and~~ ignorance and superstition, or enwrapped in the thick folds of barbarism and savage life. The spirit of Paul was stirred within him! And well it might, when he thus beheld the banner of the Prince of this world floating o'er the city. His spirit was stirred within him! What step did he take? He first went to his own countrymen the Jews. He disputed with them respecting their errors—their rejection of the Messiah; in a word, “he preached unto them Jesus.” Also to the devout persons he held the same language. These devout persons were probably those who had cast off the trammels of idolatry, and frequented the synagogue of the Jews; “he preached unto *them* Jesus;” pointed out the sinfulness of man, the corruption of his nature, and the impossibility of approaching the throne of mercy but through a Mediator; that the justice and holiness of Deity could not be satisfied unless the sins of men were punished to the full; that Jesus Christ had borne our sins, and carried our sorrows; that Jesus “was wounded for our transgressions, was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.” He would tell them that Christ was the sacrifice for our sins; that he died upon the cross to save sinners, and that he is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for us, and that he was then at the right hand of God, pleading in behalf of his true disciples.

We are also told that he disputed in the market daily with those that met him. We here perceive that he did not confine his ministration to the walls of the sanctuary, but that amid the din of business, and buzz of commerce, even there he lifted up his voice and “preached unto them Jesus.”

He next encountered the philosophers; the two rival sects of Epicureans and Stoics, who, in the pride of their hearts, assailed him with—“What will this babbler say?” They accused him of being a setter forth of strange gods, because that he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection. The Epicureans, who were, generally speaking, the votaries of pleasure, thought God to be such an one as themselves, and that he took no cognizance of the deeds of man. The Stoics, on the other hand, were most rigid, and piqued themselves on the cultivation of the sterner virtues, and thought themselves equal with God. However, although the tenets of these philosophers were diametrically opposed, they united in exclaiming, “What doth this babbler say?”

And now let us inquire how the great apostle addressed them. Did he attack them with the weapons of learning and arguments drawn from the broken cisterns of human invention? No, he pointed to an altar erected “to the unknown God,” and exclaimed, “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, **Him** declare I unto you.” This allusion was most beautiful, and would no doubt make a deep impression upon the minds of his auditors. Indeed, the



whole address which he delivered "in the midst of Mars' Hill," is a most beautiful specimen of reasoning, tact, and sound argument. He thus concludes by preaching Jesus and the resurrection. "He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

And now let us inquire if this mode of preaching was accompanied with any beneficial effects. Yes, for though some mocked, "certain men clave unto him, and believed; and among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

My Christian hearers, we have dwelt the longer upon this subject for the purpose of placing before you this golden truth, that Paul invariably preached Jesus, however circumstanced, and however placed. Whether he spake in the Jewish synagogue, to the Jews and devout persons, or came into contact with philosophers of different sects; whether he stood up in the Guildhall at Athens, surrounded by learning, talent, dignity, and power; or when, at the hour of midnight, being thrust in the inner prison, and his feet made fast in the stocks; he still "preached Jesus."

If, amidst idolatry and superstition, Paul simply preached unto the Gentiles "Jesus Christ and him crucified," and if the word then spoken was accompanied by the power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believeth, surely it will not be necessary to inquire what method of preaching, humanly speaking, is most likely to be attended with saving effects in this our day. We feel assured that whoever satisfies himself with merely delivering moral essays, and only occasionally glancing at the doctrines, the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, will never convert one soul to God, will never even materially reform the outward man, much less purify the foul streams that flow from the corrupt fountain within.

We shall endeavour to shew, in the remainder of this discourse, that however the minister of Christ is situated—whether he be delivering a discourse from the pulpit, and, consequently, addressing a promiscuous auditory; whether he be placed by the bed of sickness or of death; whether he be invited to witness the last moments of the believer or the unbeliever; whether it be his duty to warn the prosperous, or encourage those in adversity; whether he check the tongue of levity, or soothe the sorrows of affliction, he will still, under all these circumstances, have but *one* theme; will dilate upon only *one* topic: he "will preach unto them Jesus!" O there is a charm in that sacred word! O there is a virtue in that "blood divine," which washes out all the stains of human guilt and indwelling sin; there is an efficacy in the righteousness of the Son of God which belongs not to any of the offspring of fallen Adam; there is a satisfaction in His atonement which is indeed not to be described by human tongue, or even imagined by the sons of men. May we, my Christian friends, seek to be sprinkled by the blood of the atoning sacrifice; may we be clad in the wedding garment, and be received as welcome guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb! And may it please the Lord, the Spirit, to enlighten our minds, and to purify our hearts, so that we may be enabled to behold the wondrous things out of God's law! May He take of the things of Christ and shew them unto us!

The ambassador of Christ, when addressing his flock, is in duty bound to

“preach unto them Jesus;” by which term we mean all that he did and suffered, all that he taught and commanded whilst on earth; his resurrection, ascension, and intercession. In a word, his constant theme must be “Jesus Christ and him crucified.” He will endeavour, from time to time, to lay before his hearers the whole counsel of God, keeping back no precept, and no doctrine, through fear of man; and promulgating no precept, and no doctrine, to please man. Surely a most fearful responsibility rests upon the head of that man who, in the discharge of his sacred functions, preaches himself and not his Master; delivers mere moral essays, which, with little alteration, would as well be adapted for a heathen temple, or a Mahomedan mosque, as a Christian edifice. Brethren, we trust that we can plead “not guilty” to this serious charge, and whatever may be our failings, whatever be our short-comings in duty, which are neither few nor trivial, conscience, God’s vicegerent in the breast, tells us, without the least hesitation or doubt, that whilst we have ministered unto you in holy things, we have “preached unto you Jesus!” And it is our humble prayer, and confident hope, that we shall, in dependance on the divine aid for the time to come, still more earnestly, still more boldly, still more energetically, proclaim unto you *that Jesus* who is mighty to save!

We conclude this subject in the words of the prophet Ezekiel, from which portion of the inspired volume we addressed you the first time we occupied this pulpit: “So thou, O Son of Man, I have set thee a watchman unto the House of Israel, therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth; and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.”

When the minister is seated by the couch of sickness, or the bed of death, he will direct the sufferer to One who suffered, the just for the unjust; he will turn to various passages of Scripture which will afford comfort and consolation to the afflicted frame; he will point to the page on which it is written, “Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” The sick man will raise himself up from his couch, and exclaim, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.” “He preaches unto him Jesus.”

We next turn to the bed of death: see with what earnestness the man prays in the name of Jesus for pardon and acceptance; see with what intense anxiety he listens to his ghostly monitor, as he explains to him salvation by Jesus Christ, and as he tells him that he cannot be justified by the deeds of the law, that whosoever offendeth in one point is guilty of all, despair is depicted on his brow. But when the man of God unfolds the scheme of redemption, when he tells him of a blood-bought pardon, when he reads of the Saviour’s agony in the garden of Gethsemane, when the dying man pictures to his mind’s eye the drops of blood oozing through the pores of the body of Jesus, and the crown of thorns pressed upon his bleeding brow, when he further is told that the Redeemer is led like a malefactor to Mount Calvary amid the execrations of a rabid multitude, is nailed to the accursed tree, that his Father, as it were, hides his face from him, that the sins of a whole world

are then laid upon Him at that hour, that Jesus died that we might live: Yet, when the dying penitent is told that the Saviour endured all *this*, all this for *him*, he wipes away the dews of death, mingled with the tears of gratitude and penitence, and with eyes uplifted, in a feeble but soul-speaking tone, says, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?" The minister replies, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!" The expiring man gathers his feet into his bed, and yields up the ghost; and his spirit takes its flight to "that land of pure delight," "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

Thus we find that the faithful steward of God's mysteries ever "preaches Jesus." It is, however, a mournful duty to perform, to witness his fellow man quit the world, and turn a deaf ear to his message, to hear the cry of peace, where there is no peace, to see the last hour of mortality busily employed in arranging affairs that appertain to this life only, and hear the words of self-righteousness and self-justification proceed from the lips of one who, ere the clock shall announce the termination of another hour, will be writhing in that dark abode of eternal death, where his sins will ever gnaw upon his guilty conscience, and plunge him into the unfathomable depths of despair, when he recalls to mind how often the minister of God's holy word had "preached unto him Jesus;" that Jesus whose salvation he despised, and whom he must behold seated on the eternal throne, and from whose mouth he will receive his eternal doom: "Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" Is the Christian pastor sent for to soothe the sorrows of affliction? when the voice of murmuring is heard he instantly endeavours to check the unsanctified feeling, gently takes the hand of the son or daughter of affliction, and says, "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." He will unfold the pages of redeeming love; he will tell of Jesus, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, whose visage was so marred, more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men;" and when he takes his leave will have imparted that heavenly consolation, which all the recipes of worldly wisdom and earthly considerations never could afford. Yes, he has convinced his afflicted friend that there is balm in Gilead, and a Physician there.

It is, indeed, a minister's highest privilege and delight to dispense the truths of God unto a believing people; unto those who receive not with scorn, but with reverence and with love, the record which God has given us of his Son. It affords a satisfaction to the mind of the faithful steward which the language of earth cannot portray, to see his hearers advancing from the possession of one Christian grace to the attainment of another, to perceive them becoming more humble, more self-abased, as they advance in spiritual knowledge, that they study more and more to cultivate the spirit of prayer and holiness, to loosen their attachment to things of time and sense, that they are in a state of constant preparedness for that hour when the axe shall be uplifted, the blow struck, and the tree shall fall to the ground. O believe me, my hearers, the comforts of genuine piety will calm the troubled breast at a season when all the blandishments and amusements of a world, the fashion of which passeth away, shall have lost their charm; when the head is sick, and the whole heart faint, the troubled spirit will turn away, not only with indifference but disgust, from these earthly toys, and exclaim, "Miserable

comforters are ye all." Yes, the regenerate Christian, in nature's agony, can say to his convulsed frame, "Peace, be still;"

" 'Tis Jesus, the first and the last,  
His Spirit shall guide me safe home;  
I'll praise Him for all that is past,  
And trust Him for all that's to come."

But, my brethren, great as is his delight in witnessing seals to his ministry; though he marks the tear of penitence bedew the cheek, though he may convert many a soul, build up others in the faith, and behold many of his flock walk as children of light, still, that delight is damped, that pleasure is abated, when he recollects that there are others among his hearers of a far different description, and that he will be the very means of enhancing their condemnation, from his having faithfully and assiduously "preached unto them Jesus." The message proclaimed from his lips will not be a "savour of life unto life, but of death unto death" to them!

Are there any here present who belong unto this class? Are there any who, sabbath after sabbath, hear Jesus preached unto them, but still live in sin, and pursue the paths of folly and of guilt? Sinners, we solemnly charge, we affectionately exhort you, to lay these things to heart. Sinners, despisers of the covenant of grace, surely you cannot, nay, you shall not, depart, without hearing of the imminent peril in which you are placed. A maniac dancing with his chains on the edge of a precipice is not half so insane as those who reject the Saviour of a ruined world; for you are taking your pastime on the edge of a precipice; you are enchained by the pleasures and occupations of earth; and you will soon be precipitated headlong into that gulf of endless woe, where you will bewail your folly throughout the countless ages of eternity. But we trust there are many, very many, here present, of whom better things are to be hoped, though we thus speak.

My dear hearers, may we seek to imbibe more and more of the spirit of Christ; may we walk as he walked; conduct ourselves gently towards those who are without; let them see that although we abhor their sins we can love their persons; though we cannot join in their pleasures, we can sympathize with their griefs! Let us therefore strive to cultivate the spirit of Christian love to all, but especially to those of the household of faith; and let it be said of us as it was of some of old, "See how these Christians love one another!"

## GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CARE.

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 HON. AND REV. B. W. NOEL, A.M.

 ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW, MARCH 6, 1836.
 

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“ And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. So it was alway: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. At the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents. And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord, and journeyed not. And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the Lord they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the Lord they journeyed. And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed. At the commandment of the Lord they rested in the tents and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed: they kept the charge of the Lord, at the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses.”—NUMBERS, ix. 15—23.

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WE have now come to the last of those types which I proposed to illustrate, as serving to mark out Gospel truth. Enough has been said to shew how the Gospel lay, as it were, hidden under Jewish ordinances and events. We have seen how the work of our redemption is prefigured by the different sacrifices. The guilt of man, the curse that lay upon him by sin, the pollution of his nature, the great work of atonement by a divine sacrifice, were all prefigured by the various victims which were offered. The acceptableness of that sacrifice was then shewn by the incense which accompanied the Jewish sacrifices: the work of the Holy Spirit was prefigured by the holy anointing oil which was used on all occasions: and the enlightening influence of the Spirit, as contrasted with the obscurity of the law, was marked out by the rending of the veil. The mediation of the Saviour was manifested before hand by the high-priest passing into the holy of holies with the blood of the victim; thereby fore-shewing our Lord as entering into heaven to mediate on our behalf. The great duties of Christian life were prefigured by the shew-bread, and by the candlestick, which marked the burning of the Christian profession before God.

We have seen the great privileges of the Christian life prefigured by the water bursting out of the rock in the desert; shewing us how the truths of the Gospel should prove the refreshment and the solace of our spirits, and how the grace which descends from the Lord, our riven rock, is to refresh the soul in its journey towards heaven.

The cloudy pillar which guided the Israelites through the wilderness is partly typical, but may rather be viewed as a visible sign of the divine providence ever watching over his people. It may mark divine providence under the Gospel dispensation, and is in some sort a type; but it should rather be viewed as a sign of the providence which in all ages has watched over the people of God: and it is rather in that light we have now to consider it than the former.

This wonderful guide, thus provided for the Israelites from the time they left the house of bondage, after having had the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled on their door-posts, and had been brought out in haste from the land of Egypt, then began to guide them to the promised land. We find it thus stated immediately after their departure from Egypt, in Exodus, xiii.: "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." Throughout their journeys, after the rearing of the tabernacle, this pillar of cloud continually rested upon it: "On the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. So it was alway: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night." As it rested always on the tabernacle, so this became their guide in all their journeys: it directed them whither they were to go; it preceded them in their march, and pointed out the proper resting-places. We find that when they left Mount Sinai it was this which was their guide in the wilderness. In Numbers, x. 33, it is said, "And they departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey: and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting-place for them." On some occasions it was, by divine appointment, a defence to them against their enemies. When they came to the brink of the Red Sea, and were oppressed by the armies of Egypt, we find in Exodus, xiv. that "the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night." When it was no defence against their enemies, it appears to have been a defence against the fierceness of the elements. The cloud not only rested on the tabernacle, but it likewise extended itself and formed a shelter for the people generally: for we find, in Numbers, x. 34, not that the cloud of the Lord rested on the tabernacle only, but "the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day when they went out of the camp." And so says St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians, x. 1, that "all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;" an expression which would scarcely be used if it

had been limited to the spot occupied by the tabernacle. It appears to have been a defence from the solar heat in their passage through the wilderness. This defence never left them till they reached Canaan. It is distinctly said in Exodus, xl. that "the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys."

This is, briefly, the history of that miraculous cloud which the Lord appointed as the sign of his own immediate presence, and by which, in sight of all the people, he guided them to the promised land. In this there is much that may illustrate the doctrine of divine providence; much that may shew us in what manner the Lord guides his people now. That it was intended to shew us: this is obvious from various passages of Scripture. In Psalm lxxvii. 20, the Psalmist speaks of this pillar as the shepherd's guidance of his flock: "Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." And as the Psalmist there refers to the guidance in the wilderness, so he points in the same image, and evidently with reference to the same fact, to the general providence of God over his people. In Psalm lxxx. we have it thus applied: "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubim, shine forth." That which God did to his people by a visible sign of a cloud in the wilderness, was only typical and illustrative of what he does for his people always. And as that cloud rested on the tabernacle night and day, having the appearance of a refreshing shadow by day, and by night of an equally cheering fire, so is this image employed to designate the protection which God promises to his New Testament Church, as we may find in Isaiah, iv. It is there said, in a passage, the context of which marks the Gospel times, "The Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence." The difference between the type and the antitype, between the cloud that rested on the tabernacle and the blessing that was now promised to the Church, was, that the cloud rested on the tabernacle only in general; whereas *here* the promise is, that a corresponding protection should rest on every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and on her assemblies generally. The cloud by day, and the fire by night, are spoken of as a *defence*: "For upon all the glory there shall be a defence." Just as this had rested on the tabernacle, in which was the shekinah, the glorious emblem of the divine presence; so in that church, filled with the Holy Spirit who forms it into his temple, there should be this providential care, answering to the cloudy pillar by day, and the fire by night; and this providential care should be the defence of that people in whom His Spirit should reside.

We have therefore to notice how the guidance of the pillar of cloud and fire may illustrate the way in which the Lord now leads his people like a flock. We may observe, in the first place, that as the guidance of the cloud commenced from the moment of their leaving the house of bondage, after their door-posts had been sprinkled with the blood of the lamb; so the covenant promise of God surrounds a person from the moment of his being brought out of the bondage of sin, to serve God in liberty and love; the moment he is sprinkled by the blood of the atoning sacrifice by faith, and has become the child of the Most High. Till then, it is true, there is much for which he ought

to be grateful, and much which ought to guide him to God: but still the promises of God are in him "yea and amen;" that is, they only belong to those who are in Christ, having faith in his blood. Thus as the cloud became the guide of the Israelites from the moment of their leaving Egypt, so does the providence of God afford a support and a guidance to his people, from the moment that he makes them his own in Christ.

Again, as this cloud never left the tabernacle, from the day that it first descended on and covered it, till the time they entered Canaan in triumph; so the providence of God never forsakes his people from the beginning of their religious course to the end. It is said, "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall never slumber nor sleep:" "The eye of the Lord is on them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy." There is no cessation of his gracious care; but throughout all the vicissitudes of life that gracious protection is afforded: and this will be to the end; for he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." So that the Apostle says, "We may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." This gracious promise is secure to the believer from the moment he puts off this tabernacle and enters into glory.

But what is of most consequence to notice is, *the moral character of that providence*—the influence which it is intended to have on the present and the eternal welfare of the child of God. As we have already seen in the passage quoted from Isaiah, iv., the providence of God is meant to be "a defence," to his people from the various evils to which they may be exposed: whether it be the scorching of the sun by day, or evils which arise in the gloom of midnight—however opposite the dangers to which they are exposed, there is "a defence" from all. It must have been a beautiful sight to behold the vast host of the Israelites marching across the trackless wilderness: but it is a far more beautiful sight to see the myriads of God's people invisibly directed through their course to all that is most for their advantage, and preserved from all that might harm them. On "all the glory" there is "a defence:" an Infinite Mind is watching for their safety, and directing them in their course.

As this cloudy pillar guided the people of Israel forty years in the wilderness, by which they were prepared for their entrance into the promised land; just so does the providence of God form a series of measures by which his people may be prepared for eternity. The whole of life, under the providence of God, is meant by him to be a state of discipline preparatory to the eternal world. This seems the great lesson we are to learn from the pillar of the cloud. In the guidance which God vouchsafed to them through the wilderness, he supplied their wants—occasionally he might have granted them abundance. This was calculated, doubtless, to make them serve God with joyfulness, as we know it was the design of those greater providential mercies with which he blessed them till they reached the promised land: *then* they were called to serve him with joy for the abundance of all things. But during their passage in the wilderness they were subject to much trial, some hardships, and sometimes privations too.

All this was with a moral design. In the first place, it was intended, as it was calculated, to bring out to their observation their real character, and to humble them for that depravity which their conduct too plainly manifested. This intention of the guidance of the pillar is mentioned in Deut. viii.: "Thou



saat remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." Thus it appears that the providence of God, of which the guidance of the pillar was the sign, is intended to make manifest what is in the character of his people. When he sends them privations, and conflicts, and trials, and temptations, they are to serve to show them their weakness, the inconstancy of their purpose, and their proneness to unbelief. It is to show them how much of depravity still remains to be subdued, thereby to humble them, and make them see that they deserve from him far severer treatment than they ever have received. The afflictions which he sends, and the privations which he assigns to his people, as their lot, are calculated to humble them by making them feel absolutely in his hands, by bringing them to a sense of dependence, and showing them with what facility the Almighty Disposer of all events might still further diminish their earthly joys, and strip them of those possessions which they may improperly use, or may not praise him for.

Again: in all this it is obvious the Lord intended to bring them to an absolute submission to his will. This seems to me strikingly depicted in the passage I read for our text. Occasionally they repined at the divine procedure, and were anxious to return into Egypt: for those repinings they were constantly punished, and at length they were brought to acquiesce in the guidance of his providence: and when they were brought into the wilderness, though they knew not how they were then to be maintained, they quietly acquiesced in the appointment. "When the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord and journeyed not." Whether it was a day, or two days, or a year of its remaining thereon, the children of Israel journeyed not. "And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the Lord they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the Lord they journeyed. And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up they journeyed." Whatever was the commandment of God they were brought to acquiesce in it; they had no alternative: and the Lord brought them by this guidance in the wilderness to an absolute submission to his providential arrangements. This seems one of the intentions of his dealings with his people—to bring them to bow to his decisions, to acknowledge him as the sovereign disposer of their lot, to submit to every trial, and to bless him for every joy.

But in all this the Lord appears to have had a still further design. The guidance of the cloud was calculated to lead them, in the midst of privations here, to look for better joys, to the rest that remains for the people of God. It was to teach them to find their happiness in him that he thus led them through the wilderness. This is distinctly stated by Moses in Deut. xxxii. 10—12:

He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he

led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." We may observe, that, in his providence, when most severe, the Lord is gracious still. Notwithstanding all the afflictions through which he brought his people, he was still keeping them as the apple of his eye; and just as the eagle is here represented as teaching the eaglet to fly, and as accustoming it to the use of the wing which is afterwards to soar up to the sun; so all these afflictions in the wilderness, the Lord spiritualizing the minds of his people and teaching them on the wings of faith and love to fly upwards to himself—O it is a beautiful description of what God does for his people in providence, when he "stirs up their nests," permits them not to have this earth's comforts, teaches them to unsay the atheistical decision, "I shall die in my nest," and makes them perceive that this is not their home; but by the very act which breaks up their earthly comforts, strengthens the wings of faith and love, and teaches them to mount up as on the wings of eagles to himself. This is the intention of God, both in the joys and the sorrows which he sends to his people.

We have an exposition of this character of divine providence in a remarkable passage in the book of Ecclesiastes, vii. 14: "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other"—will not let his people be happy, but sends them their share of suffering—"to the end that man shall find nothing after him." That this was the intention of the Lord in his guidance of the people through the wilderness you may see in Deuteronomy, xxix. Moses, who was shortly to be called to his rest, was about to take his farewell of the people whom he had led so long: "I have led you" (he says) "forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot. Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink; that ye might know that I am the Lord your God." In all these providential arrangements this is the design, and this design they are calculated to effect—to reveal to God's people his character. They serve to mark to the reflecting Christian his gracious interposition in answer to prayer, his fidelity to his promises, his tender watchfulness over his people, the wisdom and the goodness with which he makes all events subservient to the highest purposes, and brings them to work for their eternal good. So that, on the whole, the character of the divine providence is this—to bring his people to the conviction that God leads them aright; and to believe that statement which he has made of himself—"I am the Lord thy God which leadest thee by the way which thou shouldst go." However contrary to our natural desires some of the providential appointments of God may be, still the way along which he leads his people, is the way that his children should go in: and when they get to the heavenly Canaan they will see they could not have altered any of the events, which were directed by unerring wisdom, except to do themselves harm.

If this be the character of Divine providence, it becomes most important to consider how we may best improve the events which are ordered by the providence of God. It appears from what we have considered, that the whole of life may be viewed, *ought* to be viewed by the Christian, as the discipline which is appointed to prepare him for glory. Every event of life, therefore,

has a moral character; every event of life, however insignificant or apparently fortuitous, has a moral character which the child of God ought to notice and improve, upon which he should act, and by which he should be benefited. It is thus the gracious promise will be fulfilled—"All things are yours"—"All things work together for good to them that love God." Every event of life, however varied in the experience of God's children, is sent by him in unerring wisdom, as well as infinite power; sent by him in order to promote the best interests of his people: and it becomes one of the most important duties that we are called upon to discharge, to observe the moral tendency of the circumstances in which we are placed, and to seize the advantages which each may present: there is not one of them which may not be productive of advantage, and which is not sent for that very end.

But no one can be so careless as not to see that many of them are sent in vain: the spiritual improvement may not be derived. As we see some unhappily repelling all the gracious providences of God till they are living memorials of the awful expression, "I will curse your blessings;" so also the children of God themselves may, through indolence or levity, deprive themselves of the many advantages which the providence of God was intended to bestow. The way in which the discipline of providence may be repelled and overcome, was awfully manifested in the conduct of the Jews. You find in Deuteronomy, xxviii. 47, 48, this striking declaration of what, in fact, proved to be their history, both parts of the prediction having been fulfilled: "Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things: therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things; and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee." The way in which God would draw them to himself was by blessing them, and the intention was that they should serve him with joyfulness. This was the character of that first providence; they were called to obey him joyfully "for the abundance of all things." But when that providence failed in its intended effect, through the rebellion of ungodly hearts, there was another series of providences sent them calculated to draw them back to him: a series of visitations, each surpassing the other in magnitude, was sent to bring them back to him. But these again failed in their effect, and the result is stated in those awful words in Isaiah, i. 5: "Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." For a while the visitations of Divine providence were sent with increased intensity, with a view to bring them back to his service: but when these failed, they were permitted to go on till overwhelming justice came upon them. We see this exhibited in the men who were made the monuments of the divine vengeance. Many sore afflictions were visited on Pharaoh, that he might be brought to acknowledge and obey the great Autocrat of the universe, he said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go:" and that determination was retained, till in the Red Sea, he felt how awful it is to defy Omnipotent power.

Now it is obvious that if thus the ungodly heart of an unregenerate sinner may oppose the benevolent character of the Divine providence, and may bring evil out of that which, if rightly employed, must have been serviceable to his

best interests; so in their degree may the servants of God by indolence, by sloth, by levity, by pride, by worldliness, or by other means, repel the merciful character of God's providence. Could there be a greater difference than there was in the end of those individuals—Solomon under the Old Testament dispensation, and Paul under the New? The one at the close of a most remarkable career, departed in triumph, saying, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day:" whereas the other, loved of the Lord in his childhood, blessed by the Lord in his youth, gifted with eminent wisdom, surrounded with unnumbered blessings, in some respects one of the most remarkable men that ever lived, at the fame of whose wisdom persons flocked from the ends of the earth to Jerusalem; this man, as the result of neglecting to employ the merciful providence of God for his improvement, was brought in his old age to make this melancholy and memorable confession: "Therefore I hated life." With every possible blessing crowning his lot, with every thing intellectual and physical to make him happy, he exclaims, "Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me; for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil. For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity." Now we have reason to hope that Solomon was a servant of God; we *know* Paul was a servant of God: the providence of God was calculated to bless Paul; and the providence of God was most merciful to Solomon: the one was constantly repelling the providence that surrounded him; the other constantly improving them: the one died under a cloud, it being uncertain, notwithstanding all his blessings, whether he was a child of God—we have reason to hope that he was; the other—O, how different was *his* closing scene! From the glory that surrounded the death-bed of Paul, how different must we conclude is their lot in eternity! Both, we hope, are happy in eternity; but O how different "the crown of righteousness" that awaits the one, to the crown of glory that awaits the other!

Fixing our minds, then, on the different ends of these remarkable men, let us learn what we are to expect with regard to our own experience in life. It is obvious that the whole of divine providence is meant to discipline us for a better world: it consists of a merciful series of events calculated to do us good. Our duty, therefore, obviously is, to watch the character of every providence, and then to endeavour to derive from it the spiritual improvement it is meant to convey. It is for each of us to apply this practically to the circumstances in which he may be placed. Let us notice a few instances in which providences may be thus used and improved.

When blessings are bestowed on a man from the sovereign goodness of God, it is the design of God that these blessings should inspire him with gratitude; that he should continually remember the undeserved bounties bestowed on him; that he should use those mercies to the glory of the Giver; that he should become devoted to the will of God in proportion to the benefits he enjoys. But if, instead of this, they lead him to worldliness and self-indulgence, then he has frustrated the merciful character of God's providence: and is assuredly preparing for himself some mischief. If a man observes that, after much prayer, after much watchfulness and diligence in God's service, blessings are bestowed upon him, the character of that providence is to teach him that there is a blessing attached to diligence and prayer, and to confirm those habits. If afflictions are sent to a man, a little examination will lead him to see that he has been neglectful in the ways of God, and has "restrained prayer before him:" the character of that providence is to lead him to take notice of his sins, and to inquire diligently into the cause of them. Or if he traces his affliction to any particular transgression, then the providence is calculated to teach the acknowledgment of that transgression, to bring it out, and lay it before the Lord, not being satisfied till he obtain strength to overcome it by the exercise of the opposite grace. If afflictions are sent to a man without any apparent cause—if, looking at his recent conduct, he cannot perceive any thing which he should mark as the moral cause which has sent the afflictions—then it is obvious that the moral character of that providence is different: then he should observe how it is the Lord's will, in sending these unaccounted-for afflictions, that he should be humbled, and observe the strength or weakness of his faith—his unbelief or his dependence—his gratitude or his impatience—his disposition to murmur, or his readiness to lie passive in the hand of God; and learn that the Lord is weaning him from this passing world, unfolding to him the riches of his grace, that he may choose the Lord more decidedly for his portion.

If it please the Lord to furnish his child with living examples of worth and piety, then the character of that providence is, that he endeavour to imitate them, and to fasten on his mind the conviction that such he ought to be. If any one is brought to read a good book which strikes his imagination, or influences his heart, the character of that providence is, that he act on that impression, and not trifle with it. If a man meets with a precept that strikes his mind, which seems to suit his case, and to be calculated to guard him against evil; the character of that providence is to lead him to act on that precept, and to form the habit which that precept suggests.

You may easily multiply observations like these. Each Christian may ascertain the character of that providence under which he is at the moment placed: and in proportion as he desires conscientiously to improve that providence, will be the actual result in his experience.

There are two ways in which the divine providence may be effectually blessed to us; either by yielding at once to that particular providence, and seeking the blessing it is calculated to bestow; or it may be the Lord himself, while we are reluctant and careless, so directing the arrangements of his providence as at length to humble us to solemnity of mind and self-improvement. If the latter be the case, it is obviously by the increase of the afflictions which are sent till they exercise so powerful an effect as to restrain worldliness and

promote spirituality of mind. Sometimes God may so graciously pour out his spirit as to enable his most unworthy child so to employ all the providences which he sends that they continually become the source of his sanctification. This is the happiest lot of all: beloved brethren, may it be yours! We have no reason to believe, judging from what we see in his providence, or read in his word, that our sanctification will be accomplished without these means. If we neglect his word, and misuse his providences, it is impossible, according to the present constitution of things, that our spiritual improvement should be carried on: the Lord will, according to his mode of governing us, send us severe providences, or we must be brought to employ his word and his providence aright.

Is it not far better that we give ourselves at once to reading, to meditation, and to prayer? Is it not better that we study the character of the events that befall us, and strive with a strong hand to seize the advantages we may derive from them; that, placing ourselves under his care, we entreat him to sanctify us, beseeching him with earnest solicitude to make all the providences he sends to accomplish the purpose of our sanctification.

Finally, this subject will lead us to rejoice in the Lord. There is a gracious providence secured to all his people; and while they wait on him, all things must work together for his good. Nothing but sin can do the Christian harm; nothing but sin can rob him of a single joy. All things are his: the word of God is his; the grace of God is his; every event of life is his; sickness as well as health, death as well as life—all things are his, for he is Christ's. It is our duty and our privileges to rejoice in the great work of redemption, in the work of God's Holy Spirit, in all those promises which are "yea and amen" in Christ, in the certainty of that infinite power and love which guides all events to do us good. And, brethren, since God is so gracious let me intreat you to wait on him. Never forget there can be no blessing attached to indolence: God has not so ordered his promises as to afford encouragement to unbelief. Let us seek the highest good, waiting on the appointed means of grace; and at last we shall find it was a right way that he led us, and that goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life, conducting us to dwell in his temple for ever.

THE DIGNITIES OF THE HEAVENLY INHERITANCE.

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It is the saying of the wise man, "As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart." This is true of the sorrow of the world; it is still more true of "the sorrow that worketh repentance." The mind of man becomes, in a certain sense, the more sorrowful, and outward circumstances take the hue of the spirit's mood. If the heart be troubled, we draw in the breath of commotion, and respire the elements of sorrow. If the spirit of heaviness be in the bosom, it presses down the body with gloom. When the mind is overspread with grief, the more it is encompassed by mirth, the more it is beclouded and uneasy. To a soul in this condition, home has no comfort, the sky is but a congregation of sparks, and the morning is but a funeral dirge; and it is easily seen how unlovely every thing appears to a heart that cannot rest. If sorrow has covered our spirits, or marred our peace—if it has destroyed our hopes, or blasted our prospects—nature has henceforward no joy for us: the rose withers, the violet loses its perfume, the floating song excites to tears, and the spangled robe whitens to a shroud.

But when earthly pleasures fail, religious pleasure begins: when the joy of the world expires, the joy of salvation triumphs; when the confidence of time crumbles to dust, the hope of the Gospel raises its majestic pillars above its ruins, and beams with celestial light, being written over with everlasting love. Spiritual hope and spiritual joy, are hope and joy in all places and at all times—in prosperity the crown, in adversity the balm—in prosperity the delight, in adversity the shelter from the storm. In all cases the Gospel can impart joy and satisfaction to the mind, and can take the sting out of every suffering. Hence we see the propriety and the wisdom of the Apostle's placing before them such a phrase as this, when addressing "the strangers," scattered as they were, forlorn as they were, and outcast as they were—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

In immediate position these words connect themselves with the words "lively hope" in the former verse; and they certainly indicate the object of that hope—an inheritance that admits of no touch of death, a hope which lives for ever. But in the legitimate connexion the words are connected with "begotten again." And here is a sentiment most honourable and most ennobling. The Apostle says we are born again—not to a life of suffering or sorrow—not to a life of hazard or meanness—no, nor even to a life of holy obedience, and humble faith, and inspiring expectation; but "to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." This is the very element of the new creature; this is the undoubted right, and his sure destination. As children we are by nature born into this world to be heirs of it as soon as circumstances allow. We are born as new creatures into the church in order to have its offers ours. As children of men, we say, we become heirs of this earth, its

scenes, and resources, and objects, and pursuits. It was formed and garnished for our dwelling; and so far as we do not betray ourselves—if we do not betray our reason and sense, and sacrifice our virtue, and become the servants of iniquity unto iniquity, the treasures of this earth pour themselves at our feet, its beauties assemble themselves before our eyes, and its honours invest our condition. In like manner we are born into the Christian church as children of God, by an equal right and a superior title, by the gracious appointment and sovereign will of the Most High—the appointment and the will being confirmed and sustained by the oblation and sacrifice of his only begotten and beloved Son. As children of God, therefore, we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ in the inheritance of God—an inheritance which is “incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

Do we believe this, my Christian friends? Do we realize this view of the case? Are we satisfied that we stand in this relationship to the Most High? Are you, my hearers, the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty? If so, then in virtue of your birth-right, in virtue of your relationship, you are heirs of that inheritance which is given us: and that inheritance demands our joy.

But it may happen—as it does with respect to many on earth of high estate who commence their existence as heirs of wide dominion and majestic sway, who are, notwithstanding, in their nonage, without any idea of their privileges, and without any appreciation of their rank, and without any conduct worthy of their distinction, that by and bye, as they grow up they take in by degrees the sense of their relationship, and the height of their elevation, and the range of their sway, and gradually become instinct with the inspiration of their high estate, and assume an important bearing worthy of their condition. Even so, my fellow Christians, you may continue for some time in a state of inferiority, in a state of pupilage, in a state of minority, and have very little sense of your real distinction, and very slender appreciation of your high rank. But surely it should be yours to grow in the knowledge of this honour, and to walk in some measure worthy of the high vocation wherewith you are called. It should be yours to have your minds enlightened to a full apprehension of your condition, knowing the hope of your calling, and the riches of the glory of your inheritance which is reserved in the heavens for you; whence you should be looking for the Son of God, for the Saviour, “who shall change your vile bodies that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.”

REV. G. LEGGE.



THE SAVIOUR THE GREAT "I AM."

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REV. T. MORTIMER, B.D.

ST. MARK'S CHURCH, PENTONVILLE, MARCH 20, 1836.

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"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."—EXODUS, iii. 14.

"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."—JOHN, viii. 58.

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It is not a little remarkable, that these two passages, which mutually explain and confirm each other, should both have been brought before us by the church in her service this day. I am not disposed to regard such a coincidence as being accidental; it might have been accidental if it had occurred in the second lesson for the day, instead of the Gospel for the day; as you are well aware that the order of the second lesson follows the day of the month, and that the order of the Gospel follows the Sunday. They came therefore together, not, I apprehend, by accident. I conceive that our pious Reformers, in making this selection, *designed* that these two passages should come together, the one in the first lesson for the morning service, and the other in the Gospel appointed for the day.

"What, then," it may be you ask, "is the design of the preacher in taking two texts instead of one?" Because, brethren, these two texts must stand or fall together; these two texts must explain each other's meaning. The Saviour of the world claims to be the great "I am." If his claim be disallowed, then we have no Saviour, and if we have no Saviour we have no salvation; and if there be no salvation for us there is something else for us—the blackness of darkness for ever; expulsion from the presence and the glory of God, and a state of utter, irretrievable, interminable woe: and then, if such be the case, they also that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, for they fell asleep resting upon him as their hope, their confidence, their dependance, and their trust. But "now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

But to-day we come to place every one in his own order; and in doing this we claim for our divine Lord that he be exalted "far above all principalities and powers, and might, and every name that is named, not only in this world but in the world to come, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities and powers." "All things were made by him and for him, (mark that!) and by him all things consist." All things were created by his creating power; all things are sustained by his providential care; and man, lost and ruined man, has been redeemed to God by his blood

There is something, then, very interesting, affecting, and instructive, in beholding the Son of God, not merely in the New Testament, but under the Old. We find him continually speaking unto Moses. We find him subsequently speaking to other distinguished saints. And who was it that thus spake? I answer, it was the second person in the sacred Trinity; a person to whom all homage was rendered, and by whom all homage was claimed. Very early was this seen. Turn to the book of Joshua, the fifth chapter, the thirteenth and following verses: "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" Joshua had the true heart of a soldier; he was afraid of no man; he was now commander of the forces; he was placed over the hosts of the Lord, and knew the dignity and responsibility and duty of the state in which he was. He therefore, conscious that he was led by God in the way in which he was going, boldly advanced towards this mysterious stranger, and asks him who he is: "And he said, Nay; but as captain of the hosts of the Lord am I now come." Now the soldier knows his place as a worshipper: now the leader and commander of the hosts of the Lord falls into the dust: "And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, what saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so." And then, according to our division, the chapter closes most inappropriately; for the next chapter, the sixth, contains an account of what this mysterious stranger, who came thus as the commander of the Lord's host, commanded Joshua. If you begin at the thirteenth verse of the fifth chapter, and read on, without making that pause, you will still more clearly understand who this person is: for he is called "the Lord." "And the Lord"—that is Jehovah, "said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour." "I have done this"

What, then, is the first thing that we have to notice from the words of my text? I answer, that the "I AM" of the Old Testament is the JESUS of the New. Equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, though inferior to the Father as touching his manhood. God gives his name to Moses as the "I AM," not merely as the self-existent God,

"Who sits on no precarious throne;  
Nor borrows leave to be;"

Not merely, I say, the self-existent God, but the "I am," and "all my people know me. There is my name; bring it to meet your wants, and your wants shall be all supplied before that name. We shall have occasion, before we have done, to advert more at large to this encouraging and comforting view of the subject. The pious Bishop Beveridge, I speak with reverence, plays upon this beautiful name in his "Church Music and Heavenly Bells." He brings before us the wants and necessities of the church in travelling through the wilderness. "Are they weakness? 'I am' strength. Are they sinners? 'I am' grace. All that they need he is able to supply out of the riches of his fulness; out of the riches of his fulness in glory; out of the riches of his fulness in glory by Christ Jesus."

But, mark, the second point that I would notice is this, that the **CHRIST** of the New Testament is the "I AM" of the Old. O it were a great mistake; but a mistake into which vast numbers fall, to suppose, that the Lord Jesus, the second person in the sacred essence took no interest in the concerns of his church in our lower world, until he was born as a babe in Bethlehem. It is his priority of existence, combined with his priority of essence, that leads us Christians to see that he ever cared for his church. He was the Shepherd that watched over Israel in all its wanderings; he was the Leader and Commander of the people. By his direction the troops of the Lord marched, and at his direction they halted. Mysteriously he was with them, as in the case of Joshua, in the appearance of a man; at other times without any direct appearance, speaking audibly to Moses, and directing him in the way that he should go.

Perhaps, however, some of you may be ready to say, "What reason have you, Sir, for supposing, that this mysterious person, who appeared to Joshua by the plains of Jericho, to whom he offered divine honours—and which divine honours," I beg you to notice, "were by that mysterious stranger received—what leads you to imagine, Sir, that this was rather God the Son than God the Father?" My reason is this: our Lord Christ hath told us; and he of course must be an authority in such matters, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared"—or revealed—"him." O then, how interesting is it to trace the travels of the children of Israel, and to find the Saviour in the church that was in the wilderness—mark, in the church that was in the wilderness—to see him leading the people on; bearing with them: sometimes called the great "Angel of the covenant;" at other times called "the Messenger of God;" at other times the "Leader of the Lord's host," as in the case noticed before Jericho. Now in all these cases the second person in the adorable Trinity, our divine Lord, is to be regarded, honoured, and worshipped. And yet is it not an awful thing, is it not a monstrous thing, is it not a dreadful thing to say, that when this adorable Lord *actually*—(not merely apparently, not merely took upon himself the appearance of a man, which he did when he appeared to Joshua before Jericho), but fifteen hundred years after, when he actually took flesh and came into the world—for "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father;" (what words are they!) There is royal dignity and style with a witness; and cursed be the witness that shall attempt to declare, that he is not the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of the Father: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." But I say, what a dreadful thing it is, that when he came, instead of his character being recognized and his claim allowed, his character was unknown and his claim was disallowed.

And mark, the order of the Jewish law for a blasphemer was, that he should be stoned to death: and the Jews in their ignorance and madness, not believing the royal character of our Saviour, when that Saviour laid a claim, such as no mere man could do without the grossest absurdity, as well as the vilest impiety and blackest blasphemy, when that Saviour laid claim to this—that he existed before Abraham, which patriarch Abraham had been dead and in his grave for many hundred years before—when the Galilean peasant, the man who was

the reputed son of a carpenter, and the real son of a poor virgin, true of a royal tribe, for she was a royal princess of the house of Judah; yet now Judah was in its degradation, and with all Israel was in the dust—I say this reputed son of Joseph, and this poor son of a poor and lowly, but royal virgin, claimed this, that he lived before Abraham. And what said the Jews? "Why you are not fifty years old, man, and you lived before Abraham!" and then they insulted him. But that is not enough for them; they think, in their malice and anger against him, and ignorance of his real character, they think that he is a blasphemer; and they are for very summarily dispatching him, taking the law into their own hands, and putting him to death as a blasphemer. They took up stones to cast at him; but Jesus hid himself from them, and so passed out of the temple, working a miracle, so that they beheld him not. Either they beheld him not, as some commentators imagine, or else, as others have not improbably conjectured, that he gave forth such a look of inexpressible dignity and majesty and glory, that not a man among them dared to touch him. Such, then, my brethren, when comparing the two texts together, such is the way in which, as I said at first, they mutually explain and establish one another.

What follows from this? I answer, I call upon you all, man, woman, child, old and young, learned and illiterate, high and low, rich and poor, join me, and join the church of Christ in proclaiming the style and dignity of the Son of God; in letting the world know who he is, what he is, and what are his pretensions. Do you not know, that as soon as one of our British monarchs drops into the grave, indeed before the body is committed to the grave, as soon as the vital spark has fled—what is done? Why the chief officers of state meet, they go to the chief places of concourse, they go to Charing Cross, and there they proclaim the name and style of the king now upon the throne. What did they do at the death of George the Fourth? They met, and went, if I recollect right, to Charing Cross, and proclaimed William the Fourth, and the people that stood round, though they said nothing, they felt, "Yes, this is our king, God bless him! God preserve him!" And then they went into the city, and there either they or the city officers, proclaimed again the name and the style of the monarch. I call upon you in these days of trouble, and rebuke, and blasphemy, I demand it at your hands (no wincing! no being afraid of the crown of thorns around his bloody brow!), I demand you bear your part in proclaiming the style of Jesus, the Son of God. I demand in these days when so many are found who give not him the glory due unto his name, when some are found where they ought not to be found—I call upon you, I demand of you, as you shall answer at the dreadful day of God, that you join with his faithful church and people in proclaiming his style: in other words, in setting forth before the world the honours and glory due unto his name. And I do not hesitate to say I demand this upon the peril of your eternal damnation! Go over to the foe if you dare! Go over to the enemies of Christ if you dare! Go over to the blasphemers of the cross if you dare! There is salvation in none other but Jesus, and "whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my word, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his glory, and the glory of his Father, and the glory of the holy angels."

But, further, if the Christ of the New Testament be indeed the "I am" of the Old, then I not merely demand your homage, but I demand your hearts for him. The homage is one thing; the heart, that is another. Many a man

will give his homage who will not give his heart; and yet I do say that if you have not given your heart to Christ, your homage is nothing. What, shall angels desire to look into these things, shall they at his birth sing their anthems of praise, and all heaven have a gay day, and rejoice with hearts full of unspeakable joy, while they chaunt or sing "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good-will towards man;" shall they take such an interest in this matter, and we, alas, take none? God forbid.

O, brethren, I say I ask for Him your hearts; not merely your homage, but your hearts. Any thing else? Yes, I demand from him, though but a poor unworthy witness of his cross, I demand as a minister of his, not only the homage of your hearts, but of your lives. There is not a man among you but what has been bought by the precious blood of Christ: there is not a man, woman, or child, in this church, who at length shall attain to eternal glory, who shall not owe his all entirely and for ever to the bleeding sacrifice of the dying love and rising power, and all-prevalent intercession of his Lord Christ. I ask, then, your lives. Some of you have spent your lives quite in another service. Some of you are grown old and are on the borders of the grave. Some there are, who, though they give their homage to Christ, have never given him their hearts. I ask, then, for your hearts—I ask for your lives. Religion appeals to our best affections: it is not a cold-blooded system, that merely exhibits certain doctrines or certain duties, without any reference to men's hearts. No, it teaches us all the brighter lessons in the school of Christ, through the heart to the understanding. As in the first instance we are led through the understanding to the heart; so, I apprehend, as we advance in the knowledge of the truth of God, it becomes more a work for the heart, and less a work for the head. And yet Christianity does not shrink from investigation and examination. The same plan, the same truths, feebly indeed, yet plainly preached among you this day, these are the truths it preaches. These were the things which martyrs held, and for which they bled.

Go, then, shew the world your religion. But how will you shew it? Let every man in his own life exhibit a miniature edition of it: let every man in his own heart carry it there; and what would it do for him? "In that last day," (this will answer the question) "that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scriptures hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive"

## THE SABBATH A HIGH DAY.

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REV. W. B. LEACH,

ROBERT STREET CHAPEL, GROSVENOR SQUARE, MARCH 6, 1836.

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“(That Sabbath-day was an high day).”—JOHN, xix. 31.

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THIS parenthesis in the narrative before us, is the evangelist's explanation of the particular character of that Sabbath which immediately followed the day of our Lord's crucifixion. The fact is asserted as a reason why the Jews were so desirous of extinguishing the last quivering spark of life in the malefactors whom they had crucified, by breaking their legs, lest, surviving the day of their execution, they might desecrate the sanctity which was attached to the day of rest. For this purpose, as they had no longer the power of life and death in their own hands, that having been assumed by their Roman masters, they applied to Pontius Pilate, the governor, for his permission that the bodies might be removed ere the Sabbath commenced, and the more so, as “that Sabbath-day was an high day.”

But O! the unblushing hypocrisy of this people. During the week they could meet and plan the destruction of the innocent and benevolent Jesus. They could bribe a man of treachery and blood to betray him. They could suborn false witnesses to “lay to his charge things which he knew not.” They could clamorously demand his condemnation in violation of law and justice. They could witness unmoved his writhing sufferings, and deride him when hanging upon the cross and bleeding to death; and yet, after thus loading themselves with infamy and guilt, and imbruing their hands in the innocent blood of their unoffending victim, they wish to appear on the Sabbath with all the calm serenity of devout and humble worshippers of the God of truth and justice, and under the sanctimonious garb of ceremonial purity. With these motives, every vestige of their guilt is to disappear. Their Martyr, if he still survived the agony of lingering dissolution, is to be dispatched by force. The cross is to be taken down. The rugged hill of Calvary, impressed by the feet of those who assembled to shed innocent blood, is to be deserted. Every drop of purple gore crying for vengeance is to be obliterated. The eye of the dawning Sabbath is to behold nought but sanctity and love, and the God of the Sabbath. “who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” is to be approached by a nation of murderers, under the outward forms of religion and virtue, sincerity and uprightness.

What an insult to the Great Searcher of the heart! Here was “a people drawing nigh to him with their mouths, and honouring him with their lips, when their hearts were far from him” Well might he threaten to inflict upon

them " a marvellous work and a wonder." O, my dear brethren, never forget that " God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," as " he will be sanctified in all them that wait for him; and it is not the *outward* observance of the Sabbath that will excuse the guilt of the week. There are those who are so deluded by the deceitfulness of sin, and so blinded by the god of this world, as to believe that an hour spent in a place of worship on the Lord's day will atone for the offences which have been accumulating during the other six days, and that having passed under the power of a miracle or the influence of a charm, they may return again to the same thoughtless course as before. This, indeed, is a dangerous delusion, a fatal deception; and yet, what is more common? The Sabbath is a blessed day as we shall presently show, richly fraught with holy influences to those who value and improve it; but God will not be mocked.

" Nothing but truth before his throne  
With honour can appear;  
The painted hypocrites are known  
Through the disguise they wear.  
  
Their lifted eyes salute the skies,  
Their bended knees the ground;  
But God abhors the sacrifice  
Where not the heart is found."

Having thus marked the guilt and hypocrisy of our Lord's betrayers and murderers, and derived that salutary lesson of caution which their conduct suggests, we shall proceed to investigate *the peculiar character of that Sabbath which is thus distinguished in the text, that we may appropriate the terms which are applied to it for our mutual improvement*, " as that Sabbath-day was an high day."

The pre-eminence which it received above other sacred seasons, arose from the religious festival which was then celebrated. It was the feast of the Passover, one of the three great public ceremonies of the Jews, when all the males of the nation assembled at Jerusalem to worship the Lord in a holy convocation. In Israel's best days those were services long to be remembered, and such Sabbaths on which they occurred might well be called " high days." Here was a nation of the professed worshippers of God, having one creed, one set of principles, one class of feeling, one hope, one object before them, one bond of union, which bound them to each other and to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, whilst the instructions which were presented, and the emotions which were enkindled by such services were calculated to leave a lasting savour upon every mind.

I have said that the festival which gave the Sabbath of which our text speaks so much pre-eminence as " a high day," was the feast of the Passover. Let us glance a moment at that impressive ceremony. It was instituted on the memorable night in which the first-born were slain by the destroying angel in the land of Egypt, and it was to become the peaceful sign and protecting shield by which the Hebrews were to be secured, when the minister of death smote the rising offspring of their imperious enemies. The particulars of this event, memorable to the Jews, to the church of Christ, and to the world, is recorded in the twelfth chapter of Exodus, from the first verse. By a reference to that instructive record, we behold an affecting type of our captivity under the fatal

power of sin and Satan, and our deliverance by the atonement and grace of the great Redeemer. The children of Israel, though numerous, were then in a state of cruel slavery, and unable to break the yoke of their enemies. This is our case. Although the whole world are in bondage beneath the oppressive power of the prince of darkness, he rules with an uncontrolled sway, and no ingenuity, no contrivance, no combination of human effort, could have broken the chain which bound us. But though unable to help themselves, the God of grace and love pitied their condition, raised them up a Deliverer, and brought them forth with a high hand and an outstretched arm. It is so with us. If happily set free from our spiritual bondage, we owe our liberty to the Lord of all power and might, who has sent forth his Son to seek and to save that which was lost. The children of Israel were preserved and adopted into the family of God, while their enemies were destroyed, and Christ our Lord has overcome death and him that hath the power of death, which is the devil, whilst he has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places," and made us "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." And whilst the deliverance of the Jewish captives was thus determined and effected, they were distinguished by the peaceful sign of the blood of the Paschal Lamb, between which and the blood of sprinkling derived from "Jesus and our pass-over, who was sacrificed for us," you will perceive a very obvious analogy.

According to the testimony to which we have adverted, we find, that the victim in the Passover was a *lamb*, the emblem of innocence and gentleness; fit representation of "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." It was to be *the firstling of the flock and without blemish*—an appropriate type of Him who is "the first-born among many brethren," &c., "was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." There was no blemish either in his temper, his conversation, his deportment, his judgment, or his feelings, or in any of his mediatorial offices or performances; all was perfect, all was complete. The Lamb was to be *taken from the flock and set apart from the tenth to the fourteenth day of the month*, and we can easily conceive how the different families must have felt during this interval when they looked upon the innocent victim whose blood was to become the shield of their protection from the angel of death. In like manner Jesus was set apart by his voluntary susception of the mediatorial office "to die for our sins according to the Scriptures," and came forth as "one chosen out of the people" to be "an offering and a sacrifice unto God for a sweet smelling savour." The Lamb thus selected, and consecrated to the Lord, *was to be slain*; and "without shedding of blood there is no remission," Jesus must die, or man must perish, world without end. The blood thus shed was to be *sprinkled upon the door-posts of the Hebrews*, as the seal of God's covenant with them. This formed their distinction. This secured their safety. Nor is "the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without spot and without blemish," merely shed. It must be *applied*. This is the office of the Holy Spirit, of whom the Redeemer said, "He shall take of mine and shall shew it unto you." Hereby we have the witness in ourselves, and are "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of the Lord's glory." The victim slain, and the *body roasted with fire*, shadowing forth the fiery trials and bitter sufferings to which the blessed Redeemer submitted, was to be *eaten with bitter herbs*. And where is the true believer who does not partake of the butters of life as well as of the sweet



influence of the merits of Christ, and the consolations of the Gospel? We are to expect to suffer with him that we may reign with him. And "except (by the energies of faith) we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, we have no life in us."

But this was not all. In partaking of the passover all *leaven was to be removed* from their houses, and the apostle exhorts us to "keep the feast not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The Hebrews were to *partake of the feast in company*; and the religion of the Saviour is a system of unity and love; and the ordinances of his commemorative supper, is the bond and pledge of our holy brotherhood, in which we cordially exult, "We being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Not a *bone of the Paschal Lamb was to be broken*. Neither is Christ divided. His character, his righteousness, his atonement, his grace, his promises, his purposes, all are entire, and we must receive him as such. And whilst the people partook of the passover supper, and complied with every other stipulation and requisition, they *were to appear in the attitude of travellers*, with their shoes on their feet, their staff in their hand, and their loins girt for their journey. Such is our character in partaking of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. We are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth. "Our loins are to be girt about with truth;" "our feet are to be shod with the preparation of the Gospel," and, staff in hand, we must be the "followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises."

This was the ancient ordinance of the Jewish Passover. Well might that Sabbath on which such an important service occurred be called "an high day." How much was there in such an institution to conform the mind, to impress the heart, to lead the attention forward to the true Paschal Lamb, to shadow forth the shedding of his precious blood, to exhibit the safety of those who confide in his atoning sacrifice, and thus to shew forth his death for the redemption of sinners.

Having thus explained the allusion of our text, and considered the solemn importance of that holy day of which it speaks, let us proceed,

Secondly, to apply the passage *to ourselves*.

*We* also have a Sabbath, the day which the Lord hath made—the day of Christ, the joy of the church, the sacred festival of the soul, and when rightly appreciated and improved, it is "a high day." First, it is a welcome retreat from bodily and mental toil. On the other days of the week most persons, especially in this all-absorbing and enterprising metropolis are busily occupied, both early and late, in procuring the bread which perisheth, either by the energy of their mind or the sweat of their brow. In consequence of such perpetual pressure upon their physical powers, there is the greatest danger of the bodily machine wearing out by its own friction, and what is still more to be dreaded, is the probable neglect and ruin of the soul by being thus "overcharged with the cares of this life." To rectify these evils, the Sabbath arrives, attended by its holy influences and inspiring ordinances; and like the angel of mercy, withdraws our hearts from earth to heaven. The din of business then ceases to distract and to dissipate. The world is shut up, and both the body and the soul feel the benefit of the holy instruction. Now the merchant and the tradesman retire from the turmoil of secular life, to the peaceful circle of domestic endearments

and to the much-loved ordinances of the house of God to enjoy times of refreshing from his holy presence. The labourer, the artizan, and the mechanic, lay aside the implements of their industry, relax their weary frame, and sweetly realize the savour of that welcome intelligence, "to the poor the Gospel is preached;" whilst servants have (or ought to have) the opportunity of assembling with the multitude who keep this holy day. The Sabbath thus becomes a day of leisure for special devotion, when we can assemble in the house of God—when we can narrowly inspect the state of our souls in secret—when we can read the Bible, bow the knee in prayer—instruct the children of the family, and breathe the air of heaven, as we ascend upon the wings of faith and love.

Secondly, The Sabbath is a day of holy commemoration. It was so to the Jews, for whose benefit it was originally instituted. It is to us in a still more sublime and spiritual sense. We hail the resurrection of Christ from the tomb, the completion of his mediatorial work, the cessation of his toils and sufferings, his victory over death and the grave, and the memorable descent of the Holy Ghost. We also celebrate the triumphs of the Gospel for which the Sabbath is so remarkably distinguished above all other days—our own conversion by the preaching of the cross—and the many happy seasons with which we have been favoured when attending the house of prayer.

Thirdly, The Sabbath is welcomed as presenting a pleasing spectacle of Christian fellowship. On other parts of the week we are scattered like sheep upon the mountains: now, the Good Shepherd utters his voice, gives his well-known signal, and we come together; we enter the fold, we are led beside the still waters; we rest beneath the shade of the tree of life, and at the foot of the rock, and we recognize each other as friends and brethren in Christ. And in the green pastures of Zion we are fed and improved. Our knowledge increases; our faith increases; our love, our hope, our spirituality of mind, our zeal, our fervour—every principle, every grace, is benefited, for by waiting upon the Lord our strength is renewed.

Fourthly, Nor is the Sabbath less valuable as a day of religious exertion. It should be the maxim of "all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," to *do* good as well as to *get* good. But most of the zealous friends and followers of the Redeemer are so much occupied during the week, that their efforts to benefit the souls of men, and promote the extension of the great cause of truth, are materially abridged. On the *Lord's* day they are at liberty; and we then see in the religious world the pleasing exemplification of that scripture, "The sun ariseth, and man goeth forth unto his work." Yes, the man of God, whilst cheered by the healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness, wishes not only to enjoy the light of the Lord's countenance, and to walk among the children of the light, but also, by the diffusion of that light, to become a blessing to those who are sitting in darkness, by instructing the ignorant; visiting the sick; imparting religious knowledge by religious books, and thus to live and act as a blessing to his generation.

From these and some other considerations which might be mentioned, the Sabbath is a beautiful type of heaven. Its calm serenity, its holy exercises, the feelings of devotion which are enkindled, the peace, and love, and joy, which pervade the pious mind, and that holy communion with God, that nearness to his throne, to the cross, and to the well of salvation which is enjoyed, together with the place in which we meet, the services in which we engage, and the associates with whom we mingle, all remind us of that world of light

and peace, and love, towards which we are bending our course, and lead us to exclaim—

“ Sweet Sabbath of rest—sweet prelude of heaven!  
 While on wings of devotion I rise;  
 May the joys I now feel, as an antepast given,  
 Prepare my blest soul for the skies.”

But whilst such is the acknowledged value and holy influence of the Lord's day to those who prize it and improve it, I am devoutly anxious that you should be aware of the possibility of merely observing it as a matter of form, without entering into the *spirit* of its inspiring solemnities. You may keep the Sabbath as a day of rest from manual or mental toil: you may acknowledge the Divine authority of its appointment; you may attend the house of God, and join in Christian worship, and yet not feel that the Sabbath is your delight, so as to enjoy that holy, elevating, gladdening charm, which constitutes it “ a high day.” This is the attainment after which you should aspire. This is the importunate prayer which you should offer, that you may be in the spirit; that your Sabbaths on earth may afford you sweet earnest of the joys above, the prelibation of that Sabbath in glory which will never close.

And with how many such seasons of refreshing are the people of God favoured when thus made joyful in the house of prayer. For example: First, What a high day is that Sabbath when the soul, happily released from the all-absorbing cares of the world, appears in the sanctuary before the mercy-seat, clothed with the righteousness of Christ, imbued with the Holy Ghost, sweetly abstracted from the things of time, and possessing a deep tone of religious sentiment and feeling. When faith, and hope, and love, and gratitude, are in lively exercise: when the mind is warmed with the spirit of elevated devotion, and the frame of the heart is softened and calmed by genuine humility, with reverence and godly fear. Then the harp is in tune. Every string is entire and raised to its proper pitch; the whole is in harmony; the invisible hand of the spirit of the Lord strikes the chords; and joy and praise resound to the honour and glory of the triune Jehovah.

Secondly, That is a high day when the anxious burdened penitent, who has long felt and deplored the bitterness of sin as an infinite evil, is liberated from the bondage of fear and dismay by the preaching of the Gospel, and finds joy and peace in believing at the foot of the cross. What a blessed change. What a wonderful transition. What a new world opens before him. What a happy Sabbath in which to enter upon it. This is one of the gracious designs of the religious observance of the Lord's day; that sinners may be converted, and penitent mourners may be brought into the enjoyment of that liberty wherewith Christ makes us free.

Thirdly, That Sabbath is a high day, when the pious invalid, long confined from the much-loved ordinances of Zion, is permitted once more to join the multitude who keep holy day. How welcome is the sight, the service, the sound of the well-known voice of the Christian pastor, the praises of God, the accents of public prayer, the manifestations of the Redeemer's presence. And though the remaining weakness of the body has its influence upon the kindred, sympathizing soul, still the force of Christian feeling predominates, and the exultation, “ Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee,” marks the fervour of the happy worshipper in Zion's holy temple.

Fourthly, An ordinance Sabbath is usually a high day to the Christian communicant. This is an extraordinary occasion, when, in addition to the preaching of the Gospel, we are permitted to surround the sacramental board; to appear on the Lord's side in a visible capacity as his decided followers; when we commemorate his bitter sufferings and dying love; when we sit with his people as fellow-heirs of the grace of life; and "all eat the same spiritual meat and all drink the same spiritual drink, even of that spiritual rock which follows us, and that rock is Christ."

Fifthly, And if we give wings to our meditations and ascend from the church on earth to the church in heaven, what an eternal Sabbath opens before us, in that holy and happy world. There we behold a day without a cloud, without a care, and without end, a rest which remains for the people of God, of which they often think, and speak exclaiming.—

"When, O dear Jesus, when shall I  
Behold thee all serene,  
Bless'd in *perpetual* sabbath-day,  
Without a veil between?"

If then our Sabbath on earth be characterized by that pre-eminence which we have already described, what shall we say of the superior sanctity and bliss of that celestial-sabbatic state which is prepared for us in glory? Surely that Sabbath, in the noblest sense of the expression, will be a high day, when we shall behold the unveiled vision of God, and the Lamb; when we shall participate that "fulness of joy" and "those pleasures for evermore," of which we sometimes realize the foretaste; when we shall be happily delivered from all imperfection, and mingle with the general assembly and church of the first-born in celebrating the praises of redeeming love, world without end.

Such, my dear brethren, are the present joys and future hopes which the Gospel of Christ communicates; so truly does it exhibit "the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come."

If then, the Lord's day be invested with so much importance—if it be so precious, so valuable, so beneficial to the mind, the body, the family, and the country at large, how should we deplore its lamentable profanation! How carefully should we avoid a participation of this crying sin which so loudly calls for Heaven's vengeance! How readily should we employ these holy expedients which are calculated to stem the torrent of Sabbath profanation which we deplore, by the circulation of religious books, and the instruction of the rising generation, by our influence, our persuasion, by our example, and our prayers! And as we profess to "call the Sabbath a delight," let us anticipate it and prepare for it as it approaches; let us welcome it when it arrives; let us seek to be richly imbued with the influences of the Holy Spirit as its hallowed hours revolve. Let us be very anxious to go through its valuable ordinances in close communion with God. Let us avoid every thing which is likely to dissipate the mind, and to prevent the enjoyment of *private* as well as public devotion. And let us be desirous of obtaining that renewal of our spiritual strength which will render us equal to the duties and difficulties of the ensuing week.

"In holy duties let the day  
In holy pleasures pass away,  
How sweet a Sabbath thus to spend  
In hope of one that ne'er shall end."

## ZION'S COMPLAINT AND ITS SATISFACTORY ANSWER.

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REV. W. JAY,

SURREY CHAPEL, MARCH 20, 1836.

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“But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.”—ISAIAH, xlix. 14, 15.

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WHAT a difference, my brethren, is there between the judgments of God and the judgments of men! “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” This assertion may be addressed, not only to unenlightened sinners, who are “alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them,” and because of the blindness of their hearts; but also to those who have received the Spirit of God, that they may know the things which are freely given them of God. Their illumination at present is partial; their views in many cases are obscure; they frequently come to very erroneous conclusions, and sometimes they err where the glory of God and their own welfare are deeply concerned. We have a striking instance of this in the passage before us, and which contains two parts, which will engage our attention this morning—a mournful complaint, and a satisfactory answer. “Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me:”—this is the mournful complaint. “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee:”—this is the satisfactory answer. Consider what we say; and may the Lord give you understanding in all things! Amen.

First, we have here A MOURNFUL COMPLAINT. “Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me;” he exercises no care over me: “and my Lord hath forgotten me;” he exhibits towards me no affection. Let us look into this.

My brethren, the wicked think too much of the goodness of God, you will suppose I mean in reference to themselves, for otherwise it is absolutely impossible. But they mistake the effects of his general bounty for evidences of his peculiar friendship: while they live regardless of his praise, they yet hope in his mercy, and persuade themselves that he will not be severe to mark what they have done. Now it is very true that he “waits to be gracious,” and is “exalted to have mercy;” that he “has no pleasure in the death of him that dies.” But observe his language: “Wherefore turn and live:” “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly

pardon." But the enemy of God loves to keep his palace and his goods in peace: he therefore screens from their view every thing that will have a tendency to awaken suspicion or alarm, and induces them to think only of circumstances that either flatter or encourage them.

Now I will venture to say, that the very reverse of this is the disposition of all the subjects of divine grace: they know that self-deception is *tremendous*, they know that self-deception is *probable*; they know that self-deception is *common*; and therefore they are afraid of self-deception. And they often carry their solicitude beyond the point of duty, and in reading and hearing they will apply to themselves what was intended only for others; for, as an old divine says, "There is no beating the dogs out without making the children cry:" and therefore they still refuse to be comforted. They think too little of the favourable side of the question, and dwell too little on the kindness and tenderness of God: though they are concerned so to walk as to please him, they often walk mournfully before the Lord: they are anxious as to how matters will go with them at last, and sometimes despair of ever seeing the goodness of God in the land of the living. Not that this is *always* the case: no; there are moments when their feelings are in unison with those of the apostle when he said, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Then, again, the sky which was clear is overcast with clouds: "Alas!" (he sighs) "will the Lord cast me off for ever; will he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Yes; "Zion said," "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me."

Let us try to trace up this complaint to *its source*, and then see what wretchedness the conclusion must produce in the minds of all the godly.

There is a philosophical notion prevailing, and which is of a semi-infidel complexion, which supposes that the providence of God is general, and not particular: it supposes that the Deity is engaged in managing concerns of whole worlds and systems at large, regardless of individualities. The notion has been designed, perhaps, in one view, as if these individualities would be beneath his regard, not considering that the care of the Creator and the cares of government must always be co-equal and co-extensive, and that it can never be beneath God to provide for what it was not beneath God to produce. And also perhaps, to *relieve* him forsooth; as if any thing was too hard for the Lord. Among men we well know, that, in a thousand instances, an attention to little things must prevent attention to great things, and an attention to great things must prevent attention to little things. But it is not even so with God; he wings the angel, and guides the sparrow. Yes, he regards the *whole*, and therefore he must regard the parts; for the whole is always made up of the parts: and he *does* regard the parts, and the most *minute* parts too. Can any thing perplex an understanding that is infinite? Can any thing fatigue a power that is Almighty? "Hast thou not heard? has thou not seen? hath it not been told thee from the beginning? there is no searching of his understanding: he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." The mite lives by him as well as the elephant, and the glow-worm shines by him as well as the sun. He clothes

the grass of the field: a sparrow falls not to the ground without our heavenly Father: the very hairs of our head are all numbered.

But it is not a philosophical notion, but a *religious dependency*, that affects Christians. It is not the influence of infidelity; but it is the influence, first, of *unbelief*, or the weakness of faith. Faith may be real, and yet weak, and very weak too. Our Saviour said to his disciples, "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?" Our comfort must always be, therefore, according to our faith. "In whom," says Peter, "believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." There is always consolation here, in God's riches of glory by Christ Jesus; but these can only be perceived and apprehended by faith. There is always fruit enough upon the tree of life, but faith is the hand by which alone we can gather it. There is water enough always in the wells of salvation, but by faith we must draw it. So true is the language of our prophet, in an earlier passage, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

It arises also from *ignorance*. This is very distinguishable from the former. A man may believe as far as his knowledge extends; but then there may be other things beyond, of which he is ignorant: and "how can we believe what we have not heard?" as the apostle says. There are some who resemble the poor man in the Gospel under our Saviour's illuminating process; they "see men as trees walking;" and, perhaps, the roots are up in the air, and they see them move towards them: no wonder that they feel something ominous. There are persons who have a very defective acquaintance with the grounds of a sinner's acceptance in the Beloved, and of the efficacy of the Saviour's blood to cleanse from all sin, and of the perfection of his righteousness as entitling us to everlasting glory, and of the permanency of the everlasting covenant, "ordered in all things and sure," and which "places our standing more secure than 'twas before we fell."

"More happy, but not more secure,  
The glorified spirits in heaven."

Now we allow that the believer's safety does not *depend* upon the degree of his religious knowledge; but his comfort must always be very materially *influenced* by it. And this is a reason why it is "a good thing for the heart to be established with grace;" why Christians should "grow in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour;" and why they should endeavour to obtain clear, and full, and combined views of "the truth as it is in Jesus."

It also springs, sometimes, from *the suspension of divine manifestation*. The sun is always in the sky, but not always visible. God hides himself from the house of Jacob; and if you are a part of the house of Jacob, you will be affected by it, as David was, when he said, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." Here it may be necessary to remark, that you must not consider this suspension of divine manifestation as a mere effect of divine sovereignty; for God "does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men," much less his *own* children, who are infinitely dear to him. He, himself, in this prophecy, has explained the case, both negatively and positively: "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you." It is, therefore, either as a prevention of sin, or a

correction for it: "I will go, and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early." Or it is a rebuke for some duty omitted, or some object idolized. You will do well, therefore, to think, if this be your experience now, of the address of Eliphaz to Job: "Are the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with thee?" Is there no worm at the root of your gourd? "O," said Joab, at Beth-maachah, "I do not wish to injure the place, but I am pursuing a traitor, and I will have his head; throw this over the wall, and I will blow the trumpet, and withdraw all the besieging forces:" and so it was. Thus, Christian, should you apply this: thus should you say:—

"The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from thy throne,  
And worship only thee.

"So shall my walk be close with God,  
Calm and serene my frame;  
So purer light shall mark the road  
That leads me to the Lamb."

We may also mention *conflicting with the troubles of life*. These, indeed, if viewed properly, should be considered rather as proofs that God has *not* forsaken, and, that he has *not* forgotten us. Surely the husbandman has not forsaken and forgotten the tree, and doomed it to the axe of the feller of the wood, while he manures it and while he prunes it. "He that spareth the rod," says Solomon, "hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. What son is he, whom the heavenly Father chasteneth not?" But so it is. And therefore in afflictions, and when they are various and numerous, and some of them seem so inexplicable, then the Christian asks,

"If I am his, why am I thus?"

The fact is, that all suffering is the consequence of sin, and therefore, naturally reminds us of it: and therefore, afflictive dispensations have at first a *penal* aspect, and seem to indicate *wrath* in God, and so they induce us to pray, "Do not condemn me." God is the source of all light and all comfort; and when there is no light and comfort with us, it is not easy to persuade ourselves that God is then with us. "If he be with us," said Gideon, "why then has all this evil befallen us?" "He could, by a mere volition, ease all my complaints," says the Christian, "for he has all power in heaven and in earth; and if he were my Father and my friend, would he not?" No; this does not follow: for his love is as wise as it is real. Yet, when "the clouds return after the rain," when "deep calleth unto deep," it is no easy thing for the Christian to possess "the peace that passeth all understanding." Surely Job could not find it easy to believe that God was "pitiful," as James says concerning him, "and of tender mercy," under all the losses of his substance, and servants, and children, and friends; yet he believes it *now*, and he believed it after his *deliverance*; yea, and he believed it *before*, or else he never could have said, yea, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

We remark, only once more, *the delay of God in the accomplishment of prayer*. God "is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness." He always has a time of his own, and this is the *best* time; and he



never goes beyond this time ; but then we *expect* him at an *earlier* time ; and so when he does not come, or come so soon, we are surprized and confounded ; and " hope deferred maketh the heart sick." He is always inclined to bless us, but then he is a God of judgment, and looks after the best season. " Blessed are all they that *wait* for him." " It is a good thing for a man both to hope and quietly *wait* for the salvation of the Lord." We should always learn to distinguish between the *acceptance* of prayer, and the *answer* of prayer. God always immediately *hears* the prayer of faith, but he does not always immediately *answer* it : he "*waits* to be gracious." You remember how he exercised the Syrophenician woman, though he intended to relieve her from the beginning. But how was she previously tried ! yet the trial issued in her conversion ; and he said " I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel ; be it unto thee, even as thou wilt."

Now we cannot afford time to enlarge here any further. This is, in common, perhaps, the source of the complaint here expressed.

But who can find language properly to describe *the wretchedness*, that such a conclusion as this " The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me," must ever produce in the minds of the godly ? I say, the *godly*, because as to others, as to the ungodly, they say unto God, " Depart from us ; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways : cause the holy One of Israel to cease from before us." But oh ! for a *Christian* to apprehend the withdrawal of God from him ! How, in such a case, does his soul mingle its drink with weeping ! How, in such a case, is the heart's bitterness known only to himself ! Distress of circumstances, worldly disappointments, bodily pains, the desertion of friends, family bereavements, all these could be borne, and borne well, if God is near, if God is with us, if God is in us. But (though when he giveth quietness, then who can make trouble ?) O the thought, I am forsaken, I am forgotten !

The misery a child of God feels at such a time, from such a conclusion, may be accounted for by three things. The *first* is, that he loves God. He does not love him *perfectly*, but he loves him *supremely* ; and we all know well enough, that love can never be reconciled to the absence of its object ; distance is painful, but the thought of separation is intolerable. And a Christian can say of his God,

" I cannot live contented here,  
Without some glimpses of thy face ;  
And heav'n without thy presence there,  
Would be a dark and tiresome place."

*Secondly*, he entirely relies upon him. He knows and feels that he is to him all and in all. He knows and feels that his God is more necessary to him than the sun is to the earth, or the soul to the body ; and that, without him, all must be darkness, dreariness, desolation, and death. And, *thirdly*, because he has enjoyed him already. He has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and therefore he prays, " Evermore give us this bread." He has seen the excellency of our God, and therefore he prays, " I beseech thee show me thy glory." He has had an experience of communion with God, and this stimulates his desire and makes him long for more. He is not to be ridiculed or reasoned out of his conviction here. He knows that he has had communion with God, as a man talketh with his friend—in creatures, in providences, in ordinances : and this

it is, therefore, that makes him feel so much the fear of God's forsaking or forgetting him. Thus it was with David ; " My soul thirsteth for thee ; my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary"—

" My God, repeat that heavenly hour,  
That vision so divine."

Well, such is this unreasonable and unrighteous complaint.

Let us now attend to the satisfactory answer : " Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? yea, they may forget ; yet will I not forget thee."

Let us notice the improbability of the fear, the certainty of the assurance, and the all-sufficiency of the truth established, that is, of the perpetual regard of God to his people.

First, let us notice *the improbability of the fear*. This is metaphorically expressed : " Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? yea, they may forget : " it is not *likely* that she should, but it is *possible*. It is the honour of females, that they are not only the *fairer*, but the *tenderer sex*. The young of all creatures are lovely and attractive always : but let us survey the image here. Here is a child, a harmless object, a helpless object, an endeared object, and towards which *any* one may feel compassion and tenderness. But you will observe that the child *here* is the mother's *own*—" the son of her womb ; " lately a part of herself, and endeared by the anxieties of bearing it, and the pain and peril of bringing it forth. Nor is this all ; for the mother is a *nursing* mother. Isaiah scorned to take an image of exquisite tenderness from those wretches, who, when they have it in their power, devolve this pleasing, and (ask all the physicians) this *salutary* duty upon others, upon strangers and upon hirelings : no, it is a *nursing* mother, and the child is a " *sucking* child," looking up with ineffable satisfaction to his benefactor, and with his little hands stroking the cheeks of her who feeds him. This is the image ; and, therefore, you must allow that it is not likely that a woman should forget her sucking child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb.

But then it is a *possible* case : " Yea, they *may* forget ; " more than one of them—" *they* may forget." There are two supposable cases here. For, first, she may be bereft of reason, or not survive, and so not be able to remember. How I pity the babe, whose mother is deprived of her reason, and who looks with a frenzied stare of indifference, or a morbid countenance, towards her own little one ! How I pity a child whose mother is sick and dying, and can only cast towards him a languid look, and must leave behind her the little companion, whose going with her would almost reconcile her to the passage of death ! And the other is, that she may be criminally, unnaturally led to hide herself from her own flesh. The instances, as you see by the papers, are not very rare, in which the wretched mother has destroyed the fruit of her own womb, sometimes under the pressure of want, sometimes to hide her shame, and sometimes to comply with the wishes, or even intimations of the accursed villain who has seduced her ; for to such a devil in human flesh, what is the death of the child, or the death of the mother, or the death of *ten* mothers, if his vile lusts can

be but gratified? No, says Isaiah, when we apply images to God, we must strip them of all their imperfections; we must apply them to him completely, and, as far as possible, divinely. The feelings of nature are nothing, compared with the kindness of God. The heart of Thornton and Howard was all ice and all steel, compared with the benevolence of our God. He inspires all the tendernesses that creatures feel, and he infinitely surpasses them himself. "If ye, being evil," says he, "know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you," says he; yes, and much more abundantly: she "*may* forget; yet will I not forget thee."

Observe, therefore, secondly, *the certainty of the assurance*; "yet will I not forget thee." Here you have assurance; you have his word, his own word; the word of a God of truth and of faithfulness, a God whose faithfulness reaches unto the clouds; who is incomprehensible; a Being, concerning whom Balaam, all hell as he was, could say, The Lord "is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" The word of a Being, who is free from all the sources of unfaithfulness, such as forgetfulness, such as a change of mind, such as the failure of resources to make his word good. To render all this more striking to us, but not more binding to him, he has been pleased to add to his word his *oath*; and "because he could swear by no greater, he swear by *himself*," says the Apostle. "An oath for confirmation is an end to all strife;" "wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise"—not to make, but to *show*—"the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things"—(for his word was as immutable as his oath)—"that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to the hope set before us." Hence, says God, in the fifty-fourth chapter, "This is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee; for the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Here you find God's oath interposed with regard to two things, the drowning of the world, and the desertion of his church. You believe the former; you *entirely* believe it. Why do not you dread a second deluge? Do you think there is not water enough, if God was to break up the fountains of the great deep, to drown it? O yes; but you say, he has sworn that he will *not*. Very true; so you rely upon his oath: well; and whatever enemies may assail his church, what has he said? Therefore "upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." How then can the church, that is, *his* church, be in danger? Here, also, you have the oath of God to rely upon.

Is this all? Dr. Watts says, he

"Lays the foundation of our hope  
In oaths, and promises, and blood."

Covenants formerly were ratified, not only by oath, but also by *sacrifice*. So

was this covenant of God, by the sacrifice of his own Son, a sacrifice of infinite value, and to which Zechariah refers, when he says, "As for thee, also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." The apostle, referring to this, says, God "brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant." Is this enough? No; he has not only given us the assurance in all these modes, but he has done every thing that he can do at present, in the way of *pledges* and of *earnest*: for you are not yet come unto the rest and inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you; you have not yet crossed the Jordan, nor entered the land flowing with milk and honey. All this will be done, and as surely as that he has delivered you from the land of Egypt, and caused you to pass through the depths of the Red Sea. He has remembered you in your low estate: he has given his own Son for you: he has called you by his grace: he has adopted you into his own family: he has loved you with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness he has drawn you: and "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" If, while you were *enemies*, you were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being *reconciled*, you shall be saved by his life.

Then, observe, finally, *the all-sufficiency of the truth established*; that is, the perpetual regard of God towards us. We all naturally look towards creatures, especially if they are placed above us, if they are wealthy or powerful, to gain their countenance and their assistance. Therefore, Solomon says, "Many will entreat the favour of the prince; and every one is a friend to him that giveth gifts." But there are four differences between your seeking after the favour of a mortal, and your seeking after the favour of God. In seeking after the favour of a mortal, you may *debase yourselves*; you may be obliged to submit to the meanest compliances, and to make the most improper sacrifices, in order to flatter or to please such an individual. If you are following after a swine or a dog, though he may be starved or gartered, if you are following after a swine or a dog, you must not mind, must not stand much about the road by which he draws you after him: you are at his disposal; you must be what he would have you to be. But in seeking the favour of God, the very exercise elevates us; the very exercise dignifies us; the very exercise improves and profits us. Then, in seeking after the favour of a mortal, you are *never sure of success*; after you have been toiling for weeks or years, you may find that you have been labouring in vain, and spending your strength for nought. But if you seek the favour of God, you are sure of succeeding; "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find;" "their hearts shall live that seek God." Then, if you gain the favour of a mortal, you are never sure of *keeping it*. Who has not been tempted, in passing through life, to say in his haste, "All men are liars?" This is uncandid and uncharitable; yet, after all, the Scripture says, "Men of high degree are vanity, and men of low degree are a lie; if they are laid in the balance together, they are altogether lighter than vanity." What dependence can you place upon men? "Confidence," says Solomon, "in an unfaithful man in the time of trouble, is like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint"—not only useless, but painful to you. Whereas, if you obtain the favour of God, you are *sure of keeping it*; there is no changeableness, no variation with him; he is without variableness, or the shadow of

turning; "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." And then if you could not only gain, but even *retain* the favour and friendship of a superior mortal, yet, after all, what could it do! What could it do for you in the many emergencies and incidents of life? What could it do for you in the agonies of conscience? What could it do for you in the adversities of life? What could it do for you in a dying hour? What could it do for you in the judgment-day? But when God says, "I will not forget thee," this is saying every thing; this meets every want, every failing, every fear. O, his presence can sustain us under the loss of every creature possession, or comfort, under the loss of every relative or friend; and we may say, with our Saviour, "I am alone, and yet not alone, because the Father is with me." If he says, "I will not forget thee," why, what is it but saying, "I will guide thee with my counsel; I will keep thee with my power, lest any hurt thee, night or day. I will sympathize with thee in all thy sorrows, I will attend thee in all thy afflictions. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. I will not suffer thee to be tempted above that which I will enable thee to bear. My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be made perfect in weakness." On this assurance you may rely, and say, with David, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Leaning on this assurance, you may witness, with composure, the dissolution of the universe, and, looking beyond it, say, "We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

See, then, in conclusion, first, *that distresses and discouragements are not incompatible with religion.* You may sometimes think that your case is peculiar, and that no one ever had such depressive and melancholy feelings as you have had. Well, but who was it that said, "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul?" Who was it that said, "When I would do good, evil is present with me. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" Why, Zion said, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me."

Secondly, *see how concerned God is, not only for his people's safety, but for their comfort also.* Their doubts and fears might continue, and they be perfectly safe too; but he will not have them to be continued: he is concerned to have them removed. You know how he threatened the base prophets in the days of Jeremiah, who made "the hearts of the righteous sad," when he had commanded them to make them merry. And he issues this commission to all his ministers, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."

Thirdly, *let his people fall in with his design.* Let them be humbled, and mourn over their ignorance, and perverseness, and impatience, and unbelief, that they have entertained such hard thoughts of God, that they have charged him foolishly, and unrighteously, and unkindly. Let them remember how dishonourable these conclusions are to him, how injurious to themselves, and say, with David, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." If a Christian must err, I would rather he erred

on the side of *privilege*, than on the side of *legality*. I am sure it will have a better influence over his experimental and practical religion. O, let him take care that he is not, in any measure or degree, robbed of his confidence—his confidence in a God of grace—his confidence in his security—his confidence in his final perseverance in the ways of God. Without this, how could he rejoice, or *ought* he to rejoice? But “my sheep,” says he, “hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.”

But, lastly, *do not take the comfort belonging to a gracious state, unless you are the subjects of a gracious character.* It will be dreadful, to fall from an imaginary way to heaven into the depths of hell. But such a way there *is*; yea, there are *many* such ways, according to Solomon, which “seem right to a man, but the end is death”—death eternal. Why, do not you think people may go mourning to *hell*, as well as to *heaven*? Why, it is not the cross, but it is the *cause*, that makes the martyr. Why, there are many people that mourn, who are not in Zion; and I know nothing that is more pitiful, than to see persons that are poor in this world, and yet not rich towards God; to see them perplexed and distressed with the calamities of life, and with the apprehension of death, and yet have no God, no portion, no comfort in Zion. But, says the Saviour, I am appointed “to give, unto them that mourn *in Zion*, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.” Wherefore, pray that he would remember you with the same favour, and number you with his saints in glory everlasting. Amen.

CHRIST OUR MASTER AND LORD.

REV. W. JAY,

SURREY CHAPEL, SUNDAY EVENING, MARCH 20, 1836.

“Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.”—JOHN, xiii. 13, 14.

“Who went about doing good.”—This is the shortest, and at the same time the noblest eulogium ever pronounced. I will not “give flattering titles unto man,” said Elihu; for “in so doing my Maker would soon take me away.” Yet the practice is too common. We call the proud happy; the churl is sometimes said to be liberal, and the ungodly to be bountiful. How have authors degraded themselves in their dedications, by ascribing to their patrons qualities, the very shadow of which they never possessed! Charles the Second, with all his unbridled licentiousness and wickedness, was called, even in the service of God, “our most gracious and religious sovereign.” There is one thing to surpass this; we all know what God means in the scripture, by “the man of sin,” and yet the Pope, forsooth, has always been called “his Holiness!” But now, as to the Lord Jesus, whatever we say of him, whatever we style him that is noble and glorious, we say well, for so he is; yea, our goodness extendeth not to him; yea, he is exalted above all blessing and praise; he “went about doing good.”

Some of this good was mediatorial; he had to approach God on our behalf, as our surety, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, to make peace by the blood of his cross, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. Some of this good was miraculous; he had to establish his divine mission, and to show that he was mighty to save. Some of this good was corporeal; he fed the multitude; he healed all manner of sicknesses and diseases among the people. Some of this good was spiritual; he preached the kingdom of God, and the poor had the Gospel preached unto them. And some of it was expressly designed to be exemplary: in this connexion stands our subject this evening, a connexion which exhibits one of the most wonderful and striking transactions, to be found in his whole history. It may be necessary to read it.

“Now, before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended (the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,) Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God, he riseth from supper and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. After that, he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to

wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to *Simon Peter*; and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. *Simon Peter* saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, ye are not all clean." How one is tempted here to notice and enlarge upon a number of things. But we are forbidden by what follows: "So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

Let us observe two things for our improvement this evening; first, the title they ascribe to him; and, secondly, the obligation they impose upon themselves.

First, THE TITLE THEY ASCRIBE TO HIM. Nothing can be more honourable; and yet he acknowledges that it was but just and true. "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well: for so I am."

He is, then, the Master and the Lord of his people. They learn in his school as disciples, and they serve in his house as attendants. He is their Master, as he teaches them; and he is their Lord, as he governs them. You will observe, that, in both these titles, the main idea, the leading idea is authority; only with this difference between them, the one is the authority of the master over his pupils, and the other, the authority of the lord over his servants. The latter is here principally, though not exclusively, intended, as we may infer from the words following, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the *servant* is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent greater than him that sent him." So for a few moments let us consider it.

He is their lord by the claims of *creation*. He made them. We require no other testimony than the language of revelation here: "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." As he is their Maker, he has an infinitely greater property in them than one creature can ever have in another creature; for they derive their possessions, their power, yea, their very existence itself from him. In him, they live, and move, and have their being. He is the framer of their bodies, and the former of their spirits within them; and his life, and favour, and visitation, preserve and indulge them. If, therefore, he were to call into his presence a monarch or a philosopher, a Boyle or a Newton, and say, "Take that thine own is, and go thy way," what could either of them take away with him? Why not even his existence: he would relapse instantly into his original nothing.

But he is their Lord by the claims of *redemption*. "Know ye not," says the Apostle to the Corinthians, "that ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price?" And we are not left to conjecture what that price was, for we are told, that we are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

"A price, all price beyond;"



a price to which nothing can ever be added, and in comparison with which, of all the privileges we ever enjoyed or the duties we ever performed, we shall say, with the Apostle, if we are in a proper frame of mind, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord." Now redemption gives him a greater claim than even creation. Redemption delivers us from greater evils than creation. Redemption advances us to greater blessings than creation. Redemption is accomplished by a much more expensive process than creation. When he had to make us, he had only to speak; when he had to redeem us, he had to suffer: he made us at the expense of his breath; he redeemed us at the expense of his blood. This, therefore, is not only a very great, but O, what a powerful claim! Where, Christian, where is he, when he makes the demand, My Son, give me thine heart? Why, in the manger at Bethlehem; in the garden of Gethsemane; on the cross of Calvary. How is he appalled, when he comes effectually to rule in you? Dressed in a garment, clothed in a garment dipped in blood.

We must concede that he is the Lord of all as Mediator, and even as a partaker of our flesh and blood. "The Father loveth his Son, and hath given all things into his hands." Yea, "when he bringeth his first-begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him." There is not at this moment a being in the universe, that is not either his servant or his slave. Devils are all under his control. He is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. They are all raised by his power, and governed by his providence, and amenable to his authority; and they all subserve his purposes: the very wrath of man praises him, and the remainder of wrath will he restrain. Canaan was given to the Jews, and therefore it was called the land of promise; and, being promised, nothing could hinder their possession of it in due time; they marched forward, therefore, with God at their head. "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah was his sanctuary and Israel was his dominion. The sea saw it, and fled; Jordan was driven back: the mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams, and ye little hills, like lambs?" Thus, through all difficulties and dangers, they entered more than conquerors. It is the same here. God has given his own Son the heathen for his inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. It is therefore a matter of promise; and therefore he will be able to realize it in due time. He will crush, as he goes forward, every power that would withstand him. He has all the resources of nature and providence at his disposal. The nation and the kingdom that will not serve him must perish. He will overturn, overturn, overturn, until he shall come whose right it is, and he will give it him. Every valley must be exalted, and every mountain and hill must be laid low, and the crooked be made straight, and the rough places plain, that the glory of the Lord may be revealed, and that all flesh may see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

But you will observe that he is "head over all things unto the church, which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all;" he reigns over them particularly. Let us, therefore, observe, that he is their Lord by their *own choice and submission*. Once he bare not rule over them; that is, as he does now; they were not called by his name. But he opened a passage into their

hearts ; he made them willing in the day of his power. A look, a word from him was enough ; and he knew where to find you, and how to call you. He turned and looked upon Peter, and his poor heart was melted, and he went out and wept bitterly. He said to Matthew, as he was sitting at the receipt of custom, "Follow me," and he arose and followed him. He said to Saul of Tarsus, only "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest," and he was disarmed of his enmity, and the lion became a lamb, and the raven a dove, and at his dear feet he exclaimed, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Thus they gave up themselves to his service. And the glory of his dominion is here, that he reigns over the souls of his people, that he does not govern them only by external rule, but by internal influence ; that he enthrones himself in their consciences, and that he puts his laws into their minds, and writes them in their hearts, and so renders their obedience wholly natural, and pleasant, and delightful. He illuminates their understandings, and displays to their view his loveliness as well as his power. And thus they run after him ; for he draws, and draws them with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love. Thus they call him their Master and Lord, in their addresses to himself. Thus they call him Master and Lord, in speaking of him to each other. Thus they call him Master and Lord, in their profession of his name, and in joining with his church in holy communion.

But all this will be vain, unless it be practical not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And this brings us, therefore, to the obligation, which they hereby impose upon themselves. "Ye call me Master and Lord : and ye say well ; for so I am : If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

Secondly, Let us consider **THE OBLIGATION AT LARGE**, and take the instance before us as only one of the exemplifications.

First, "Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am ; if I, then, am your Master and Lord," *you ought to renounce connexion with every other.* This, you remember, the church did of old ; they said, in their confession to him, "Other lords beside thee have had dominion over us ; henceforth by thee only will we make mention of thy name." And you must remember that this is not only becoming, but it is absolutely necessary ; for "no man can serve two masters ; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other ; ye cannot serve God and mammon." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Here you find that our Saviour excludes us from all other dominion but his own, in religion. We say *religion*, because his dominion is spiritual ; and, therefore, it does not interfere with, nor invade, the relation of ranks and grades subsisting between man and man. Your rendering unto God the things that are God's, does not prevent your rendering unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's ; yea, you are commanded to be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake, and to submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake. But even this service is regulated by his authority too. "Children," says the Apostle, "obey your parents, in the Lord, for this is right in the Lord." If any superior, therefore, requires of you what he forbids, why, you are previously engaged ; and you must say with Peter and John, "We ought to obey God rather than man." You will remember the address of our Saviour to his disciples, when he said, "Call no man master upon earth, for one is your Master

even Christ, and all ye are brethren." Thus he releases his subjects from all authority as to conscience but his own; and if we stand fast in the liberty wherewith he has made us free, we shall never implicitly resign our understandings, or our creed, or our credence to any man, nor shall we follow him farther than we find he follows Christ. But there is another part of his address not always remembered: he not only said, "Call no man master upon earth, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren," but, said he, "Be not ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." There are those, who refuse dominion, who are ready enough to require it. What is radicalism but another name for tyranny? If we obey the royal law, we shall see, too, that we do not exert an undue authority over the mind of another. We shall not refuse communion with them, we shall not unchurch them, nor unchristianize them, because they differ from us in minor things. We shall remember the language of Paul and his companions; "We," says he, have no "dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy, for by faith ye stand." Remember, therefore, to draw this particular to a conclusion, that your Saviour designs to set you free from the yoke of bondage to custom, to tradition, to councils, to superstition, to will-worship, and to all authority in religion but his own.

Secondly, "Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye do well, for so I am; if, then, I am your Lord and Master," *you ought to obey my commandments*. There cannot be a better evidence of sincerity than this. "If ye love me," says he, in another place, "keep my commandments." His servants ye are, to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey. You are not your own masters, and therefore you are not to live to yourselves, and you are not to live to the lusts of men, but to the will of God, ever saying, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." For a knowledge of his orders, you must repair to the Scriptures, and to these only; "To the law and to the testimony, for if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them;" and "if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them," and do them impartially. You will observe, here, that, though imperfect obedience may be sincere, partial obedience cannot be so. He that said, "Do not commit adultery," said also, "Do not kill;" now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art a transgressor. He that says, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is," says also, "Enter into thy closet;" if you are always in the sanctuary, therefore, and yet never alone with God, you are a transgressor. He who says, "Provide things honest in the sight of all men," equally says, "Give alms of that which ye have;" if, therefore, you never run in debt, yet if you are not liberal, you are a transgressor. You must shun all that he forbids, and you must pursue all that he enjoins, esteeming all his commandments concerning all things to be right, and hating every false way. Thus, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should afterward receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went. And thus, when he received that awful command, "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him up for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of," he arose early in the morning in order to show his ready obedience.

Thirdly, Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am; but if I am your Lord and Master, *you ought to submit to my appointments*. As he

gives us our work, so he must determine when, and where, and how, we shall labour and serve him. We are not at our own disposal here, but at our Master's, and must say, or endeavour to say, with David, "Here I am; let him do what seemeth him good." You must not, therefore, complain if he restrains you. You must not murmur if he tries you. You must not repine if he bereaves you. The gardener, having a rare and beautiful flower, feels interested in it, and views it with pleasure; when he goes down by the parterre some day, he finds it is gathered, and he says, angrily, Who has gathered this flower? looking around. One says to him, "The master, he gathered it;" then he is silent. So was another when he sustained such loss; "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." "Be still, and know that I am God." He has a right to determine your connexions, the bounds of your habitations, the way in which you are to glorify him; and he never exercises this right, but for your own welfare, because he is infinitely wise and infinitely kind; and therefore, you may well resign yourselves to him. He calls some to move in public stations; he orders others to walk in the shade. Some at his bidding cross o'er land and sea; they also serve him that wait, and they also serve that suffer. And, frequently, Christians have been the most useful, in glorifying their Lord in the fire; thus they have awakened attention; and when their temper and their demeanour have said, in their sorrows, Though I mourn I do not murmur; "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted;" "Let thy loving-kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant;" "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt," what an impression has been often made! How it has displayed the excellency and the efficacy of the Gospel, in showing its rich supports and consolations, inducing others to say, with Young,

"Now see the man immortal; him I mean  
 Who lives as such; whose heart full bent on heav'n  
 Leans all that way, his bias to the stars—  
 The world's dark shades, in contrast set, but raise  
 His lustre more \_\_\_\_\_  
 Observe his awful portrait, and admire;  
 Nor stop at wonder; imitate and live.

Fourthly, "Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am; but if I am your Master and Lord," *you ought to imitate me*. "If any man serve me," says he in another place, "let him follow me." If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. You see this specified here; "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." This does not regard the letter, but the spirit of the action. Why, the letter may be maintained without the spirit, as you know the pope annually washes the feet of a few paupers in a silver vessel. And on the other hand the spirit may be maintained without the letter. We are to distinguish between the principle and the expression; the one remains always the same; the other will vary in a thousand cases according to times, and places, and conditions. What our Saviour, therefore, requires in your imitation of him, here, is that you be always ready for the performance of the duty he requires. What is this duty? then, you ask. Why, this, that

you should consider no service too mean for your performance, if the welfare of a fellow-creature or a fellow-christian requires it; that you should condescend to men of low estate; that you should learn of him who was meek and lowly in heart, and who pleased not himself. We may extend this, now, to every other grace. The apostle John says, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk, even as he walked." Here, you see the inestimable mercy spoken of, is union and communion with him; but the claim—how is the claim to be tried and judged? How are we to determine whether this claim be valid or vain? How do you regard him? Regard him, says the apostle, as your model, having the same mind in you which was also in Christ. He was so zealous, that he could say, "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up." Are you fervent in spirit, while serving the Lord? And he could say, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work;" and is your duty in any measure your privilege? And, though a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, in the midst of the church he sang praises: and are you thankful, even in your trials? And when he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich: and are you ready to communicate, willing to distribute? And he said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do: and are you implacable, or are you ready to forgive others, as he has forgiven you? This must be the criterion. You are Christians so far, and no farther than, as you resemble him. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ," says the apostle, "he is none of his."

Fifthly, "Ye call me Master and Lord," you say well, for so I am; but if I am your Master and Lord," *you should esteem all you have as mine, and use it accordingly.* Your endowments, your talents, whatever they may be, these you are to preserve, and employ, and improve for him. He says, "Occupy till I come," and he will require his own with usury. I wish you would observe this circumstance. If you have no title to yourselves, which, I think, we have proved this evening, how is it possible that you can have a title to any thing that you now call your own? No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; but "whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; so that living and dying we are the Lord's; for to this end he both died and rose again, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living." Do you think, now, that your time is your own, that you may lie as long in bed in the morning as you please, or that you may lounge as much in the day as you choose? You will soon appear before a Being, who has said to you, "Redeem the time." Can you suppose, that your tongues are your own, and that you may use them as you please? Let me tell you, you will soon be in the presence of a Being, who has said, "For every idle word that men shall speak, they must give account thereof in the day of judgment; for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned:" and who inspired his apostle to say, "If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth himself, that man's religion is vain." And do you think now, that your substance is your own, that you may either hoard it, or that you may expend it as you like? You will soon be in the presence of a Being, who has told you, "To do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Have you thoughts? They ought to cluster around him, and you should be able to say, with David, "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How

great is the sum of them!" Have you passions? You have; and you ought to be able to say, with Watts,

" If there be passions in my soul,  
And passions, Lord, there be,  
Let them be all at thy control,  
My Saviour, all for thee."

" As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same." " If any man speak, let him speak according to the ability that God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever.

Sixthly, Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am; but if I am your Lord and Master, *you should be willing to partake with me in all my estates.* This is what he said to his hearers before; " If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub; how much more shall they call them of his household? The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord; it is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." Can you object to this? If you are to reign with him hereafter, you must suffer with him now. If you are to live with him in heaven, you are to be dead with him on earth. Do you feel any thing like this now? When his word has free course, and runs, and is glorified—when sinners are added to the church, such as shall be saved—when professors walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, does this delight you? On the other hand, are you sorrowful for the sorrow of Jesus, and is the reproach of the church your burden, and are you humbled and grieved, when you hear of the miscarriages of professors of religion? How desirable is it, that you should feel this oneness of mind and of heart with the Lord Jesus! And this will be the case, if you are found faithful to the obligations under which you are.

Seventhly, Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am; but if I am your Lord and Master, why, then, *you may depend upon me for all the advantages of the relation.* Says the apostle to the Colossians, " Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of your inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ." It is impossible for you to serve him for nought—" Verily there is a reward for the righteous." O! you say, but it is a reward of grace. Who wishes to deny this? This renders it the surer: this renders it the sweeter: this renders it the greater. This enables us, since it is a reward of grace, to believe in its greatness—" Great is your reward in heaven." But there is not only a recompence after the service, but even in it—" In keeping his commandments, there is great reward." If the queen of Sheba envied Solomon's domestics, and said, " Happy are these thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom," how much more should we hail the servants of the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who dwell in his house, and are still praising him, each of whom can say with David, " On thee do I wait all the day." O, he is surely your Lord and Master; he will supply, he will support you; he, like a wise and good master, will consider all the injuries done to you, as done to himself; he will not lay more upon you, as his servants, than he will enable you to bear; he will make your strength equal to your day; his grace shall be sufficient for you; he will not cast you off in the time of old age, nor forsake you when your strength faileth; no, the

boary head shall be a crown of glory, found in the way of righteousness; and he will behold you with pleasure, and say, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth." Yes, in eternity, in time, in life, in death, in prosperity, in adversity, in all his lively frames, and in all his gloomy ones even, every servant of the Lord Jesus will be able to say, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord."

Well, then, in conclusion, first, *entertain proper apprehensions of Christ* He is not only a Saviour, but he is a Lord and Master. Is Christ divided? This is impossible in the reality. But there are some, who would thus separate what God has joined together, in their views, and in their creed, and in their practice too. There are some, who would receive him as their Redeemer, and yet, who would not hail him as their sovereign. And concerning these, he says, "As for those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring them forth, and slay them before me." Such is the doom of those, who take his sceptre and dash it against his cross. Do you imagine, that he came by blood only, and not by water too? Is there nothing in sin, but guilt? Is there not pollution? Does it not defile, as well as condemn? And do you not need, therefore, cleansing as well as pardon?

Then, secondly, *beware of hypocrisy and inconsistency.* Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say? Why do you wear my livery, while you are entirely regardless of all my concerns? "If I am a master, where is my honour?" "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." "What doth it profit, my brethren," says James, "though a man say he have faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" Yes, faith can save him; but not such faith: so it is to be understood. Faith without works! O the inconsistency! Far worse in its consequences, than the entire neglect that is observable in many professors of religion. "Out of the same mouth, proceedeth blessing and cursing: my brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive berries, or a fountain send forth both salt water and fresh? Be decided. Do not puzzle men to determine what you are, but declare plainly that you belong to the Lord Jesus, and that you are concerned to promote his cause and glory in the world.

Thirdly, *some have other lords; some love idols, and after them they will go.* Some call gold their hope, and make fine gold their confidence. Some are lovers of pleasure, more than the lovers of God. Some love and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is God over all blessed for evermore. I may address you, in the language of Saul to David's followers, "Can the son of Jesse give you fig-trees and vineyards, and make you captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, that all of you follow after him?" May I not say to you, Can the world give you those inestimable blessings, which the Lord Jesus will confer upon you, intermingled, indeed, with trials here, but without admixture before the throne of God, and of the Lamb for ever? Or must we remind you of the address of God to the Jews, in the days of Jeremiah, "They have turned their back upon me, and not their face; but in the time of their trouble, they will say, Arise, and save us; but where are thy gods that thou first made? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble."

No, you must lie down in despair. "What fruit had ye then, in those things whereof ye are now ashamed," says the apostle to the Romans, "for the end of those things is death."

Finally, *O that I could persuade you, immediately and sincerely, to take him for your Lord and Master!* O that you would take with you words, and turn unto him, and say, "Lord take away all iniquity; receive us graciously: so will we render thee the calves of our lips!" O that you would realize the language of Isaiah, "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel!" And will none of you, my young friends? What a privilege is early dedication to God? Beza says in his will, "Lord, I thank thee, that at the tender age of sixteen, I was enabled to give up myself to thy service." There are, in the presence of God this evening, those who could say the same; and next to the salvation of their own souls, are they daily blessing God, that they were enabled to remember him in their youth. Excited and encouraged by those blessed words, that have adorned many an early tomb—"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me," whatever be the resolution of your neighbours, your friends, or even your relations, say with Joshua, "As for me, choose ye this day whom ye will serve; but I cannot suspend my choice upon yours; choose ye this day whom ye will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Well, what can you say in answer to this? Have you ever heard any thing unfavourable of him? Is he not worthy of all your homage and service? Is not his yoke easy, and his burden light? Ask those who have worn the one and carried the other. Is not his work honourable and glorious? Is not his service perfect freedom? Is not "godliness profitable in all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come?" O, but you must give us time to consider. What time do you require? How much time have you already expended! And how uncertain is your continuance here! How soon may you be hurried into eternity, exclaiming, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!" And can you be saved too soon? and happy too soon? And what time do you require now to deliberate? What is there to deliberate upon for a moment? Whether you should be slaves, or whether you should be servants! Whether you should touch the golden sceptre that is stretched forth, saying, Touch and live; or whether you should be dashed in pieces, like a potter's vessel, with the iron rod! Do you require a moment, to decide whether the devil shall be your master, or the Lord of life and glory; whether hell or heaven shall be your home? Wherefore "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

**amen.**



## THE EFFICACY OF BAPTISM.

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REV. W. DODSWORTH, A.M.

MARGARET CHAPEL, MARGARET STREET, MARCH 14, 1836.

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“Baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”—  
1 PETER, iii. 21.

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MOST sacred and most responsible is the profession of the Christian; let us take our impression of it from the language of Holy Writ. The Christian is *one who is in Christ*; and of him, therefore, it is written, “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new;” and he henceforth “lives not unto himself, but unto him which died for him and rose again.” Of him it is written, that, by Christ, “the world is crucified unto him, and he unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” The Christian, again, is *one in whom Christ is*; of him, therefore, it is written, “If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.” The Christian is *a son of God*; of him, therefore, it is written, “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God; for “ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father:” and “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” The Christian, again, is *Christ’s*, or one belonging to Christ; of him, therefore, it is said, “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” The Christian is *one to whom the Scriptures assign the name of “saint,”* or “holy one;” one set apart from an evil world for the service of God; he, therefore, is included in the frequent apostolical salutation, “To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus,” “to them that are called,” “to them that are saints,” “beloved of God,” “faithful brethren,” “elect,” and “partakers of the divine nature.”

The Christian, again, is *one who has been baptized*: of him, therefore, it is written, “We are buried with Christ by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is free from sin.” “Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God

through Jesus Christ our Lord." Of him it is written, that "Even when we were dead in sins, God hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And again, that "ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Such, my brethren, is a specimen (and but a specimen, for passages of a similar character might be greatly multiplied) of the language by which the Scriptures designate the profession and the character of a Christian. And the actual and avowed profession of every Christian is in perfect keeping with this language; for he has pledged himself before God to renounce the lusts of the flesh, and the pomps and vanities of the world, the devil and all his works. He has pledged himself before God to live, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; to prefer spiritual things to carnal things; the things which are not seen, and which are the objects of faith, to the things which are seen. He has pledged himself to renounce those things which now minister to his vanity and pride, and carry away his heart from God and the things of God, or which dazzle the eye with their splendour, or corrupt the mind with their frivolity. And he has solemnly pledged himself to the belief of the articles of the Christian faith. He has received the Scriptures as inspired of God, and as containing those truths which will make him wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Now when we come to compare this language of Scripture, this acknowledged profession of Christianity, with the actual state in which Christians are living, in which they have lived from their youth upwards, there certainly does appear to be a gross and palpable inconsistency. To think of addressing those who are living in every kind of worldly folly and frivolity, who are frequenters of those amusements which the world has invented to encourage vanity, pander to a refined licentiousness, and estrange the heart from God—to think of addressing these persons as "saints," a name which they themselves will ridicule!—to think of addressing them as "faithful brethren in Christ," as "quickened together with him," and "set in heavenly places with him," who are addicted to intemperance and lusts, who are found often throwing despite on the sacredness, and denying the fundamental truths of the Bible!—to think of our inviting into our Christian assemblies, and addressing as "dearly beloved brethren," and "beloved in Christ," the thousands who are living without God in the world, who know nothing of his service or worship, and who, perhaps, scarcely remember that they have entered a church, or bowed the knee to Jehovah! Compare, I say, the scriptural delineation of a Christian, with the actual condition of those who are called by this holy and distinctive name, and what is there which appears more extravagantly inconsistent! It is scarcely, then, subject of surprise, that an inconsistency so gross and palpable, should sometimes fearfully strike the mind, and suggest a difficulty with respect to the initiatory rite of the Christian church—How is the efficacy of Christian baptism to be reconciled with the actual state of those who have been baptized?

I have endeavoured to place this discrepancy between the Christian profession and the Christian practice, in the strongest possible light, because I believe it lies at the foundation of those lax notions which widely prevail amongst the Separatists from our church and alas, amongst many members within the

church, on the subject of holy baptism. The efficacy of Christian baptism, as a channel for the conveyance of the Christian blessing of remission of sins and renewal after the divine image, is denied on the ground that it is not borne out by experience; that in point of fact we do not see that difference between baptized and unbaptized persons, which the possession of this particular privilege ought so strongly and unequivocally to indicate. Hence the Dissenters, and many who have followed them, would reduce the sacrament of baptism into a mere "outward sign of the inward and spiritual grace;" a sign which significantly points to the inward grace, which God *may* confer either at that or any other time, but which is not, *as an ordinance*, accompanied with such grace. Thus baptism is made a mere form of admission into the outward privileges of the church; the inward grace is altogether separated from it. So whilst it is admitted, of course, that God may confer grace at the same time as baptism (as he may, of course, at any time), yet no connexion between the inward grace and the outward sign is recognized.

Now of this system, I would observe, that it is entirely founded on human experience, and not upon the divine revelation. It is supported not by the testimony of Scripture—scarcely an effort is made so to support it—but by what man can discern of his fellow man. Let us suppose—and it is no impossible supposition, except to one who holds the heretical doctrine of the absolute necessity of evil—let us suppose that the Christian church did exemplify, and carry out into action, the Christian principle and character; let us suppose that all who are baptized were really living the Christian life, which baptism represents unto us—would there then be any hesitation in tracing up the origin of the new and regenerated life to that holy ordinance? If such a state of things were realized, could any one so tamper with the language of Holy Scripture, as to interpret it in any other way, than as connecting remission of sins, and regeneration by the Holy Ghost, with baptism? When we read, for instance, such exhortations as these: "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins;" "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord:"—when we read, that "as many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death:" that "we are buried with Christ by baptism unto death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, even so we also should walk in newness of life:" that "we are buried with him in baptism, wherein also we are risen with him, through faith in the operation"—the energy, the in-working—"of the Holy Ghost;" not that that passage can mean that faith is thus wrought by God, but it means faith in the in-working of God, who exercises that power by which he even raised up Jesus from the dead. Again it says, "For as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ;" that God our Saviour, "according to his mercy, hath saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" and to crown all, when we read, as we do in the text, "Baptism doth also *now save us*," and then the parenthetical explanation, "(not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ"—I say, when we read such language as this, could we for a moment call in question, if Christians lived as they ought to live, that the Scriptures intend us, yea, direct us, to look to baptism as introducing us into the new and spiritual life of Christianity; not the outward form, but the inward grace; not the mere shadow of the blessing,

but the substance of the blessing; should we not at once say, as St. Paul teaches, that the new life is conferred through baptism, and that thus baptism is the instrument by which we are grafted into Christ?

Now if this be conceded, as indeed we think it must be, the only question which remains is, How far are the assertions of Scripture to be superseded or modified by human experience? How far may we allow what we can actually discover in the state of our fellow men to stand in the way of the plain testimony of God's holy word? Now to this it must be replied, that in reference to such questions, and especially in reference to this question, the Scriptures must be the sole umpire, and that the testimony of human observation is to be entirely, altogether, and absolutely set aside. For in a matter which has respect to the planting of the inward and secret life in the soul, it is clear that human observation cannot be cognizant of it. It is a matter to which above all things we must apply the Christian rule, "We walk by faith, not by sight." We have nothing but the bare simple word of God to rely upon: to all outward appearance the individual comes up out of the waters of baptism even as he went down into them; the change which has passed upon his soul is confessedly secret and invisible. As to the change which in due time is to be manifested, as to the time when the holy seed, sown in the waters of baptism, should spring up and bring forth fruit, we still are not constituted judges in this matter. The seed may lie for a longer or a shorter time beneath the ground; it may be choked with weeds; it may be choked in its growth, by the unfavourableness of its situation; still we are not competent to say it is not there: this is a matter altogether above and beyond our cognizance. If, for instance, we had seen David, guilty at once of the most degrading lust and the most treacherous murder, we might have imagined that the root of godliness had altogether died away in him; and yet we should have been mistaken. Or had we witnessed Peter repeatedly denying his Master, with all the solemnity of an oath, we might have judged him fallen to rise no more, and that the root of the matter was not in him; but we should have judged erroneously. So I admit there are even greater difficulties in our reconciling the efficacy of baptism with the practice of professing Christians. Yet our judgment in such a matter, if we venture to exercise it, would be doubtless erroneous; for it is a doctrine altogether out of and beyond the reach of any faculties we possess. We are not competent to exercise any judgment upon it; we must then at once and altogether come back to the law and the testimony; we must appeal to Scripture; we must judge of the efficacy of baptism, not by our own impressions, but by the simple testimony of the Word of God.

And here we may challenge any one to produce a single passage from the Word of God, in support of that view of baptism to which I have alluded as generally entertained amongst the Separatists, namely, that baptism is merely an outward sign of the inward grace, which may be then, or at any other time, imparted. The Scriptures always connect the waters of baptism with the inward grace upon the soul: they speak of baptism as the laver of regeneration, as in the epistle of Titus; as the rise of the new birth, as in the third chapter of John; as the grafting us into Christ, in the sixth of the *Romans*; as the beginning of our spiritual sanctification, in the fifth chapter of the *Ephesians*—"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word:" and as

in the text itself, as the medium, or rather the instrument of salvation; "Baptism doth also now save us."

If, then, the question concerning the efficacy of baptism is to rest on the evidence of Scripture alone, we may consider it as settled; the testimony of Scripture is entirely on one side, and the Dissenting view of it rests altogether on human reasoning, and on a supposed experience in a matter in which man can have no experience. I may assert it without fear of contradiction, that the efficacy of this sacrament was universally held by the early church, and that the opposite doctrine, with only a few exceptions scarcely worth notice, was a novelty introduced as late as the fifteenth century, and is clearly to be traced to that violent re-action that took place at the Reformation, which carried away some good men into extremes, and led them to work changes, which, neither an impartial examination of Scripture, nor a candid appeal to ecclesiastical antiquity could justify. That our own church has avoided these extremes, and in the present case has adhered to Holy Scripture and the primitive doctrine, we have happily the most explicit and substantial authority.

It is certainly, brethren, surprising, that any one can call in question the fact, that the Church of England holds the efficacy of baptism. By adopting the Nicene Creed into her formularies, she calls upon her members to profess their belief in "one baptism for the remission of sins." In her baptismal service she adopts such terms as these: "We call upon thee for this infant, that he coming to thy holy baptism, may receive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration." "Sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin." And after baptism, "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit; to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy church." Consistently with this, in her catechism, she teaches every one of her baptized children to say, "My baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." It asserts that "the inward and spiritual grace of baptism is a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace."

Such, then, is clearly the doctrine of the Church of England. She teaches her members to look back to their baptism, as the instrument whereby they were grafted into Christ; as that in which they began to receive from God the elements of a new and spiritual life: not only "badges or tokens of Christian men's profession"—not as a significant emblem and sign—but rather they be certain, sure witnesses, and effectual signs, of grace, and God's good-will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him," as the twenty-fifth article of our church speaks.

Now the constant charge which in modern times is brought against this doctrine of the efficacy of baptism is, that it brings back the *ex operati* of the Roman Church. Yet I believe that men bring this charge without clearly understanding the nature of the charge itself. It is, indeed, rather difficult to discover what the Romish Church actually does hold on this subject, for there is a great inconsistency in her writers upon it. If that corrupt communion maintains the efficacy of the sacraments independently of the power of the Spirit, that the receiving the outward elements alone, independently of the

divine influence, does work remission of sins; that the Divine Spirit does regenerate, *ex operati*, mechanically, as it were, which some Romish writers assert—then to these doctrines the Church of England is altogether adverse, and protests against the Romish corruption. But I believe it would not be fair to charge this error upon the Romish church in principle. I rather believe the doctrine of that corrupt church to be in theory, that the faithful alone partake of any benefit from the sacrament, although that doctrine has not been so much insisted upon by them as one could wish. But the practical error of the Romanists seems to be this, and it is indeed no small one—that they attribute to baptism itself that which ought to be attributed to the grace of God in baptism. This I take to be the great distinction between the Romish doctrine of baptism and the Church of England doctrine.

However this may be, our own church is entirely clear from all the objectionable meaning that can be attached to the doctrine of the *ex operati*. If we ask, “What is required of those who come to be baptized?” She distinctly replies, “Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament.” And if we further ask, “Why then are infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform these promises?” She replies, “Because they promise them both by their sureties; which promise, when they come of age, themselves are bound to perform.” It is her doctrine, then, not that regeneration accompanies baptism in all cases, merely *ex operati*, mechanically, as it were. But only when it is the case of an adult is there actually required repentance and faith. In the case of infants this promise is made for them. Such infants she considers entitled to make this promise, and so enjoy this blessed privilege, as are either born within her pale of Christian parents, or who, in respect of their Christian profession, are adopted by Christians in communion with the church, and who thus become their sponsors: thus the church provides, so far as she is able, that they shall be brought up to live the rest of their life according to this beginning. Such baptism she ever regards as efficacious to the cleansing away of the sin in which we are born, to justification, to the implanting the new life, to adoption into God’s family, and heirship of the kingdom of heaven.

Such, then, my brethren, I conceive to be the doctrine of our church, founded on the sure warrant of Holy Scripture, and confirmed by all ecclesiastical antiquity. I would point out now any seeming difficulties that may arise from actual experience, and which stand in the way of the explicit declarations of Scripture. Undoubtedly, as I have already admitted, these difficulties are very great, and require a large exercise of faith to uphold the efficacy of baptism in the face of the fact, that to all appearance, thousands and hundreds of thousands receive no benefit from it. It calls for the faith of Abraham, “who against hope yet believed in hope.” Yet the proper use to be made of this sad truth is, not an encouragement to unbelief, not to cause us to lower down the force of Scripture language, but to lead us to search and examine, and see whether we ought not to consider the anomalous state of the baptized as caused by the carelessness, faithlessness, and thoughtlessness of ourselves. With feelings of deep humiliation and grief it must be admitted, that the practice of our church lamentably encourages the desecration of this holy sacrament. Practically excluded as it is from our public service; with rare exceptions,

never witnessed in the midst of the congregation; sponsors admitted of whom the church knows nothing, and who may be themselves unbaptized, infidels and scoffers; or if these are extreme cases, they are, at least, persons who are wholly un instructed in the duties which they so readily undertake; the child left to grow up in utter ignorance of the solemn vow and profession which that child has made: when we consider this, I say, is it to be wondered at, that an impression should be conveyed to many, derogatory to the sacredness and efficacy of this divine ordinance? Truly we have ourselves to blame for it. Is it wonderful that men seeing the church dealing with baptism, as if it were a thing of nought, should imbibe the notion that it is merely for a sign of admission into the church, and for the giving a Christian name? Let the church, at whatever sacrifice—for, indeed, is it not worth any sacrifice?—let her restore baptism to its proper place in the congregation; let her aim be to maintain among her members a godly discipline, and this will tend, assuredly, more than any thing else, to bring back the primitive belief in the efficacy of baptism.

An impression has sometimes prevailed, extensively prevailed, that this belief has a tendency to produce formality. It is imagined, that if persons are taught that they are made Christians in baptism, it would encourage them to rest in that ordinance, instead of giving all diligence to make their calling and election sure. That the doctrine may be so abused, and has been so abused, must be admitted. That some have taught baptismal regeneration in a manner calculated to injure vital, inward, practical godliness, may be, and, I fear, is most true. But assuredly our church has no sympathy with such teaching: she teaches the efficacy of baptism, not in order to supersede the daily renewing of our souls by the Holy Ghost, but as the source, the spring, the great incentive to such renewal. The substance of her teaching is, not “Ye are made Christians in your baptism, therefore it is well with you,” but it is, “Ye are made Christians in your baptism, therefore live and walk as Christians. Then God gave you a new and spiritual life; see that ye cherish it, nourish and treasure it, by prayer, by reading of the Scriptures, by the means of grace. Then God gave you a covenant, and pledged himself to be your God; he received you into his family as his own child, and gave you the richest tokens of his love. Live, then, and walk as sons of God; walk worthy of the vocation wherunto ye are called, continually mortifying all your evil and corrupt affections, daily progressing in all godliness and love.” So far from the efficacy of baptism having any tendency to lull men into a false security, it is, when rightly viewed, the most heart-stirring and heart-searching of all doctrines. It exhibits the slothful and the worldly, amid the pleasures of life, not as a mere ordinary sinner, but as one who is throwing away the most glorious privileges, breaking the most solemn and blessed covenant, treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant wherewith he had been sanctified an unholy thing, and casting despite on the Spirit of grace. My brethren, it is the very ground-work of all Christian repentance. Those who have been baptized cannot be mere rejecters of the Gospel; they cannot be as the heathen; O, it would be better far for them if they could! They stand on a pinnacle of privilege; they stand between the highest blessings and the deepest curse. They must be either dwellers with God, sharers of his bosom, co-heirs with Christ, or they must be apostates, reprobates, twice dead, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. And is this, then, a condition in which a

man can go to sleep? Is this a condition in which he can sit down at his ease, and say, "Because I am baptized I am saved?" Is it any encouragement to him to cry "Peace, peace," to the soul, when there is no peace?

On the other hand, the doctrines of grace are in the efficacy of baptism most strikingly and powerfully illustrated. I am aware that here again an opposite impression has been received. It has been thought that such views of baptism, are cold and lifeless, and minister to what is termed a spirit of legality. But unquestionably this is not the case. The efficacy of baptism bears the strongest possible testimony to the weakness and helplessness, and sinfulness of human nature. It exhibits in the most forcible light the truth, that "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." It sets forth how entirely the work of God is above and beyond all co-operation on the part of man; how impossible it is to draw life out of the corruption of human nature, until God shall first implant it there. It shews how necessarily all Christian duty is founded on Christian privilege. It says not, "Work in order to obtain God's favour;" but it says, "God worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." It says not "Strive to please God, and then he will forgive you your sins;" but it says, "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God, therefore walk as becomes partakers of these great and blessed privileges." It says not "Work for your life;" but it says, "God hath planted life in you, nourish it and cherish it. Ye are grafted to the risen Saviour through baptism; ye are risen with him; if ye then be risen with Christ seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."



**THE BELIEVER RISEN WITH CHRIST.**

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REV. D. WILSON, A.M.

ST. MARY'S, ISLINGTON, EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 3, 1836.

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“ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”—**COLOSSIANS**, iii. 1, 2.

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THE glorious event which we this day celebrate, forms the distinguishing triumph of Christianity: it exhibits the most stupendous act of divine power that man ever beheld. All the hopes and expectations of the church in every age have been centred and reposed on it. “ If Christ,” says the Apostle to the Corinthians, “ If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” The whole scheme of man’s salvation then falls to the ground. Satan triumphs, sin reigns supreme, the powers of darkness are victorious, the enemies of Christianity conquer, all the believer’s hopes lie buried in the tomb of the Saviour, and he is of all men the most miserable.

But we rejoice to be assured that the reverse of this is the case. “ Now,” exclaims the same Apostle, in holy triumph and exultation, “ Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.” The rising Saviour bursts the chains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it, resumes again that life which he had voluntarily laid aside, and opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Now it is not wonder and joy alone that this great event calls for; it admits of solemn inquiry and application. It reminds professing Christians at once of their privileges and duties; it summons them to act consistently with their high and holy calling; to rise and ascend with their now risen and triumphant Saviour, from a state of spiritual death, darkness, and degradation, to one of life, hope, activity, and joy. Let us view the subject of our Lord’s resurrection in this light, and regard it as furnishing ample motives for renewed holiness.

The Apostle, in the words before us, first describes the new state into which the Colossian converts were now brought; he, secondly, urges the important duty to which they were consequently called; and he, lastly, supplies a powerful motive for the diligent improvement of these means. And now may the presence of God be with us; may our risen and ascended Saviour vouchsafe his grace and his blessing

The Apostle directs our attention, in the first place, to **THE NEW STATE OR CONDITION INTO WHICH THE COLOSSIAN CONVERTS WERE NOW BROUGHT.** They were “ risen with Christ.” The expression is remarkable; it is more fully explained by the Apostle in the preceding chapter, in which he speaks of them

as "buried with him in baptism, wherein also," he adds, "ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you," he continues, "being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of the flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." For man, my beloved brethren, in his natural state is dead, lifeless, torpid, destitute of spiritual life or spiritual vigour. The buried and lifeless corpse, entombed in the grave, is thus no unsuitable type or representation of the spiritual death of every unrenewed heart. So it is also a most remarkable illustration of that spiritual death unto sin, that crucifixion to the world, that deadness to the things of time and sense, which is at once the duty and the privilege of every renewed soul. But man in his natural and unrenewed state is thus morally dead. He lies prostrate, inactive, lifeless. It is not a sleep merely; it is not the mere being deprived of sensation for a time, by the temporary suspension of the faculties. He is dead; dead to God; dead to any suitable or adequate views of religion; dead to any just conceptions of sin; dead to any aspirations after holiness; dead to any love to God, to desires after heaven, to any longing after pardon, acceptance, and grace. A moral death prevails; the bones lie scattered, as represented in Ezekiel's vision, "very many and very dry."

From this lifeless and hopeless condition, then, the Spirit of God quickens the renewed and awakened heart. The voice of mercy echoes, as it were, through the dark recesses of his moral tomb. That same divine power which recalled to life the entombed Saviour, which restored the natural vigour of the mangled corpse of the crucified Redeemer, which caused again the pulse to beat and the lungs to play, which put new life into the languid eye, and nerved with wonted power the torpid limbs—that same divine power, and that alone, calls up the dead and lifeless soul to a newness of life. He then, for the first time, begins to pray, he begins to feel, he begins to think, he begins to inquire; and the energies of the new and spiritual life are put upon him; he throws off, as it were, the grave clothes of his former state of ignorance; begins to live for God, to live for eternity; to cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. All is new, all is altered, all is changed; old things are passed away, all things are become new.

Then, further, he is risen *with Christ*. We are "risen," says my text, "with Christ." For, apart from the resurrection of the Saviour, there could be no quickening of the dead and lifeless soul of man. Had the tomb retained in eternal triumph the buried Saviour, man had never been restored either from natural or moral death. Satan had then retained it in bondage: sin had held him in its adamant chain; nay, that chain had only been rivetted upon him with increased force. But Christ rose triumphantly from the tomb, and the powers of darkness are confounded; the Saviour rose and burst the bands of death and the prisoner's chains drop: he is quickened by his triumphant Redeemer; sin is forgiven; pardon is found; divine justice is satisfied; he rises with him to newness of life. For if Christ be thus risen from the dead, then is the prisoner set free; then is Satan vanquished; then is death despoiled of its sting, and the grave of its victory. Then shall the Holy Ghost be poured out in large measure; then shall the church send forth her acclamations to her now risen and ascended Saviour; the last enemy of man shall be vanquished, and the last lingering opponent to the triumph of the Redeemer shall be trampled

under his feet. Hell trembles! heaven rejoices! and a new shout of praise and exultation bursts from the throng of celestial worshippers, "Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down which accused them before our God day and night."

But it is not sufficient to be merely acquainted with these our privileges; urgent and important DUTIES are closely connected with them. The Apostle does not remind the Colossians of these their present hopes and present feelings, merely as a topic of joy and triumph; he employs them as a stimulus to renewed diligence, activity, and vigour. He summonses them to act consistently with their high and holy calling. This was the second topic for our consideration. "If ye, then," says the Apostle Paul, "be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." It was the sad and affecting complaint of St. Paul to the Philippian Church, "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's:" and the same complaint may be again and again repeated in our own day. In temporal, earthly concerns, the mind of man will readily expand as his talents and opportunities enlarge. His character becomes, in a great measure, altered and adapted to his new condition. The man of enlarged powers and of high attainments, whose rank in society is distinguished, and his condition known, will disdain to mingle with the common crowd of citizens, but will seek for companions adapted to his distinguished place in society. In religion, alas, it is otherwise: exalted privileges and lofty attainments do not find accompanying feelings or principles. The great mass of professing Christians live vastly below their high privileges. The world, with all its trifles, its vanities, its pursuits, and its engagements, will entangle him, will engross him, will divert his heart and affections from his God. He is a Christian only in profession. He has a name to live but is dead. Look, my beloved brethren, for proof of this to the great body of professing Christians: they are indeed bearing on their foreheads the name of Christ, they profess to belong to him who is dwelling above; they would have others to believe that they are religious, they adhere to the outward forms of Christianity, and mingle with those who belong to Christ. But amid all this external form of Christianity, where, I ask, are their hearts? Where are their affections centred? What is the natural bent, and bias, and inclination, of the mind? You must not form any opinion respecting them, from their occasional acts of forced devotion; you must not judge them from their conduct in the house of prayer when, under the impression of a momentary excitement, the tear of penitence may drop, and their minds may be excited by some topic of temporal interest. Follow them into the ordinary routine of daily life, and mark now the tendency and bias of their minds, how will you find it? Are they seeking after those things which are above? Are their affections, I ask, "set on things above, not on things on the earth?" Do the things of this world, and the engagements of time and sense, only occupy that necessary attention which they require, while they revert with joy, and pleasure, and delight, to spiritual and everlasting things? Or is not precisely the opposite the case? Are they not still, with all their religion, and all their profession—are they not still carnally minded? Are they not engrossed with the world, and is it not the

service of religion which is the forced and unnatural effort. Like the raising of water by mechanical pressure above its level, will not the current of the affections, when left to themselves, flow down again?

Do I say this is the case merely with nominal Christians? Alas, brethren, the best and holiest among us will have to complain with the Psalmist, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust." How readily are our thoughts diverted by these earthly trifles; how easily are they drawn off from spiritual things; how soon do we forget that we are strangers and pilgrims here, that our treasure and our home are above. Hence the importance of the Apostle's exhortation. Hence the importance of employing the celebration of our Saviour's resurrection as an incentive to watchfulness and renewed diligence. You profess to rejoice at the event; you profess to have risen with Christ; you call yourselves his members; you have professed to have forsaken your former dead and lifeless state. Live then for God; seek after holy things; let them be the objects of pursuit and affection. Forget what is behind; reach forth to what is before; rise from the bed of carnal sloth and negligence; rise with your risen and ascended Saviour to newness of life. What is there here to engross the affections and win the heart of a risen and undying soul. All is worthless, all is transitory, all is defiled with sin, all has a tendency to engross and entrap the affections and weaken your hold on Christ. What is a Christian here? A stranger and a pilgrim, passing through the lower scene to another and an eternal world. It becomes him not to make it his rest. Objects of far higher and more transcendent value are presented to his view—a crown of glory, an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled; a treasure in the heavens which doth not wear, nor thief approach, neither moth corrupt.

But, in the third and last place, **WHAT IS THE MOTIVE BY WHICH THE APOSTLE ENFORCES THE DUTY BEFORE US?** It is one derived from the present glorified and exalted state of our risen and ascended Saviour. He points the Christian to his once degraded but now triumphant Lord. He reminds him of his present acknowledged union with him and his dependence upon him. He bids him remember, that Christ is no longer to be found amid earthly trifles and the vanities of this lower scene; that he has left the world; that he has risen and ascended above; and that he shall soon behold him encircled with the glorious realities of eternity. Then he urges upon him to seek after those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

The Apostle, you observe, takes it for granted that Christ is the supreme object of the Christian's hope, and desires that he may be filled with gracious anticipations of him, whom not having seen, he has yet learnt to love. And thus he takes occasion to urge the importance of setting the heart and affections on spiritual things. How powerful, my beloved brethren, how constraining is the motive which the Apostle here employs. How necessary to the visible church of Christ that such a remonstrance should be regarded. Man knows how to value and preserve earthly friends and benefactors; time and distance cannot banish them from his remembrance, or sever that bond which unites brother to brother, and friend to friend. Distance will only tend to increase the ardour of our affections, and add fuel to the flame. The mind loves to transplant itself in imagination to the distant abodes of the objects of our fond affections, and to realize in imagination what we cannot actually behold.

Alas, how different are our affections in matters of religion! As Christians we belong to Christ; we are united to him in the tenderest of bonds; we are united to him in the bond of gratitude and affection. He loved us ere we loved him; he presented his life a voluntary sacrifice for sin; he suffered, and bled, and agonized on our account; he has risen triumphant from the tomb as our victorious head, and now he is removed from our sight. Yet a little while and we see him; the heavens have received him; he sits triumphant at the right hand of God, and even there he is not uninterested in his people, for even there he pleads on their behalf. He pleads for them; he intercedes for them; he presents their supplications at the throne of grace; he prepares mansions for his people; he completes his conquest over their enemies and his enemies; and he will return again to receive them unto himself. And yet he is forgotten, he engages not our thoughts and our affections. Instead of seeking after those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, we are engrossed, and occupied, and filled with creature objects. We give our main attention to the world, to a world at enmity with our Master, to a world which has cast off allegiance to him, to a world which slights him and dishonours him, which cries, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

How vivid is the Apostle's appeal. Have we then forgotten our hopes, our privileges, our duties? Whose are we? To whom do we belong? Whose property do we form? Whose name do we bear? Where is that Redeemer to be found, whose cause we profess to espouse? Shall we find him amidst the haunts of pleasure and dissipation? Shall we meet with him in the busy scenes of life? No, brethren; silence, retirement, meditation, prayer, these are the means for holy intercourse with the ascended Saviour. The heavenly-minded Christian, and he alone, understands what it is to commune with Christ: he shuts his door about him and opens his heart to the instruction of his love; or he meditates on his sacred name, a name which is as honey to his taste; or he comes up to this house of prayer; and his heart burns within him as Christ opens to him the word of divine truth. Faith brings him into contact with his risen and ascended Saviour; faith enables him to see him who is invisible: he has fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

And now, in drawing this subject to a close, permit me to employ it in a two-fold manner; first, as furnishing solemn matter for enquiry; secondly, as supplying a topic for consolation.

And first, how deeply solemn a subject for close *inquiry* have we here? We all by name and profession belong to Christ: many among us, I trust, have risen with him from a state of moral death to one of spiritual life. I say, then, Does the character and the spirit of our actions accord with our profession? What means this sluggishness, this torpor, this deadness, this unconcern? What means this restlessness, this over carefulness about the things of time and sense; this carelessness and indifference to eternal subjects? Some are actually sleeping at their posts, totally without concern upon this momentous subject; others are declining, going back; they did run well for a time but now they are stopped in their course; while others again are endeavouring to serve God and Mammon. My beloved brethren, permit me to say, your situation is most critical and most alarming. Where is your first love? Where is your professed subjection to the Gospel of Christ? Have you thus "risen with

Christ?" Have you "put off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light?" Where then are the proofs and evidences of this newness of life? O, awake thou that sleepest! Let the Saviour's resurrection summon you now to renewed diligence. Seek those things which are above. You have a race to run; you have a prize to win; you have eternal things to seek for; see that you fall not short by unbelief. Let it be seen by your spirit, your actions, your conversation, whose you are, and whom you serve. Come out from the world and be separate. There must be a difference, there must be a wide and marked difference, between the children of God and the servants of Satan, let that difference be seen; let that difference be readily marked; shine as lights in the midst of a dark and benighted world.

But, secondly, our subject furnishes us with a topic for *encouragement*. It is calculated to cheer and encourage the afflicted believer, who has little here to console him, and who is pursuing his weary course downwards amid tears and disappointments and alarm. My Christian brethren, ever remember, that your hopes and your affections must centre above. Your Saviour is not here, he is risen, your comforts and your joys spring not from this untimely soil, they are natives of another soil; they flourish in the Paradise of God. Your partners in religion, in the heavenly race, are for the most part above; they have been withdrawn from this lower world; they have joined the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven: let your encouragement then be, that your rest, your repose, your refreshment is to come, and that these very trials and difficulties are sent in love; in order to wean you from the creature, in order to draw you off from earthly things and lead you to "set your affections on things above."

May the celebration of the Saviour's passion at his table to-day, be the means of drawing off our hearts from this lower scene and raising our dead and lifeless souls towards heaven and eternal things. Live, my beloved brethren, live more and more as strangers and pilgrims here. Sit loosely to this lower world; let your conversation be in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

## POPULAR NOTION OF HEAVEN.

“ WE all know what is meant by a Mahomedan Paradise—we all know, that when the Arabian impostor, the shooting star of the Revelations, promulgated his system of blasphemous deceit, he painted heaven under the aspect most calculated to allure the natives of an eastern climate, and all that can fascinate the voluptuous, and all that can charm the sensual, throughed the eternity which he promised to his followers. It was no marvel that the Saracens flocked gladly round a prophet, who taught them, that by the bold enterprizes of war in his cause, they should insure to themselves admission into the perpetual enjoyment of all in which the most carnal imagination can delight to revel; and certainly it were but a mockery of your understandings if I should stay to prove to you, that a Mahomedan’s notion of heaven strikingly evinces that he can see nothing ‘ of the kingdom of God.’

“ But while the men of Christendom are not in danger of being deceived with the expectation of a sensual Paradise, we meet constantly with ideas of what may be termed an intellectual Paradise. I think that very commonly literary men, if they be also in any sense religious men, associate heaven with larger developments of science and general knowledge—they look to enjoy in futurity the society of beings of an illustrious genius, they dwell with complacency on the wide and burning fields of intelligence which may then be thrown open to the expatiations of their spirits, on the vivid light which will then be cast over the most mysterious and perplexing phenomena, and thus they hang with much of rapture on the thought, that the future shall unravel all intricacies of the present—that secrets, on the exploring of which the labour and the talent of successive generations have been verily squandered, shall be laid open to their gaze; and that permitted, it may be, to range from one bright station in the universe to another, they shall gather continually an exuberant harvest of wondrous discoveries, and be admitted by the Creator into all the arcana of his most splendid operations.

“ Brethren, I do believe that we shall move hereafter in so noble and enlarged a sphere of being, that the knowledge which the acutest among us can now attain of the works of Omnipotence, will appear nothing better than the veriest ignorance, when compared with that which shall then be imparted. But although there may be nothing unlawful in allowing the thought of this extension of knowledge to enter into our musings on heaven, yet it is decidedly carnal to allow such a thought a strong and prominent place; and I look upon it as one of the delusions of Satan, to lead men to fall in love with a paradise of their own creating, and then to fancy it the paradise of their Maker’s creating. It is just the cheat and jugglery of the evil one to make that heaven whose prime rapture results from a knowledge of God in Christ, seem identical with an ideal heaven glowing with a knowledge of God in nature, and thus to persuade an unregenerate man that he is anticipating with delight the portion of the regenerate man, whereas the unscriptural imagery on which he is gazing proclaims with a voice like a chariot’s blast, that ‘ Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’

“ There is another point on which I would touch briefly and gently—gently, because it is bound up with the kindest sensibilities of our nature, and it is not requisite to a minister’s faithfulness that he should ever utter words which are tinctured with harshness. I turn to all that the Bible delineates of the joys and the occupations of heaven, and I find nothing but one uniform repre-

sentation of rapture derived from communion with the Lord, and extacy experienced in beholding and celebrating the majesties of the Lamb. I find nothing but incidental yet brilliant notices, which exhibit to me the gladness of immortality as resulting from contemplations of the Redeemer as he is, and from the privilege of mingling with a countless assembly chaunting to the harpings of golden harps their lofty praises of salvation. There is much of simile drawn indeed from material scenery; but nothing can be more palpable than that such simile is adapted in condescension to the weakness of our capacities, and that its simple scope is to portray the spiritual enjoyment of presence with Christ, and of the immediate manifestations of his glory and his love. And whilst I thus find that God in Christ is a believer's heaven, what shall be said of that religious romance which would identify heaven with the memory of dear and buried kindred—pointing to the shore of the celestial Canaan, not as the scene in which Christ shall be met, but as the spot where we shall rush again to the warm embrace of some being, over whose ashes we have wept the bitter tears of weary months.

“O, it may be a lovely thought, and when chastened and moderated by Gospel prescriptions, I suppose it to be a lawful thought, that in yon fair world which woos us persuasively to its peaceful coast, the bands of friendship, which death hath burst rudely asunder, shall be again united, and that they who have walked in holy communion as fellow-heirs of the same promises, shall there be linked in a still holier amity as partakers of the same possessions. But what better is it than turning heaven into earth, if we transfer to it all the array of creature affections, if we look upon it as increasingly desirable, just in proportion as it is peopled out of our own circle of Christian intimates? and must not that be a degraded conception of eternity which dwells on the fact—there shall be no parting, to the comparative forgetfulness of another fact, there shall be no sinning, and so wraps itself in the hope of meeting a child, or a wife, or a parent, that it seems ready to dispense with all conjunction with the Husband of the Church, and the friend who is described as sticking closer than a brother? I would say nothing that might be deemed stoical, but I must enter a Christian's protest against this dishonouring of Christ, and this absurd division of the celestial family into separate groups, each moving in that petty circle of relative charities which had been chalked out amid the selfishness of this degenerate world. And whilst I own it would be but a churlish speech to affirm that these views of heaven as a meeting-place for parted friends, prove that he who entertains them has never yet been *born again*, yet assuredly, they are the views of the old man and not of the new, and are generated by that which remains of carnal, and not by that which has been inserted of spiritual nature. And if it be thus undeniable that the carnal nature, so far as it is thus unsubdued, introduces into our conceptions of heaven thoughts which detract from the simple and scriptural characteristics of heaven, then it must be allowed that this carnal nature is of itself unable to discern or appreciate the happiness of heaven; if the remnants of this nature still struggling in a Christian's breast, produce, as it were, dark specks in his vision of futurity, then it is fair to argue, that the visions of men in whom this nature is wholly unchanged, can be nothing else but one universal blot. The clearness with which heaven is discerned appears proportioned to the decisiveness with which the old man is resisted, and hence it might be called a logical inference, that ‘Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”—REV. H. MELVILL, A.M.



THE BEATITUDES—THE NATURE OF BLESSEDNESS.

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REV. J. RUDGE, D.D.

ST. SEPULCHRE'S CHURCH, SNOW HILL, NOVEMBER 7, 1824.

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“Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”—MATTHEW, v. 3.

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CHRYSOSTOM, Theophylact, and many other fathers of the Christian church, are of opinion that our Lord's sermon from the mount was the first which he ever preached to the public. Whatever be the credit due to this opinion, the sermon itself claims, on every account, our strictest reverence and regard. The Gospel philosophy which it contains throughout far exceeds every thing that has been said or written by the greatest and wisest philosophers who ever existed, notwithstanding that, to a mind unenlightened, it may appear, if not absurd, in many respects strange and paradoxical; for, in the language of an able writer, in place of one contrary position expelling another, which was what the philosophers were wont to say, *contrarium contrarium expellet*, one contrary begets another. To illustrate the truth of this remark: *poverty*, which is wont to expel riches, is here said to beget them; for who so rich as he who possesses a kingdom? *Mourning*, another beatitude in the estimation of the great Instructor of Christian philosophy, is wont to banish joy; but here it is said to produce it; for “they that mourn shall be comforted.” *Meekness* often exposes its possessors to insult, to oppression, and the loss of personal liberty and property; but here it is said to secure an everlasting inheritance. *Persecution*, the bane of human felicity, is here represented as making men happy and blessed. How alien this doctrine from the ideas which obtain in the world! The exclamation of worldly men is, “Blessed are the rich, the powerful, the honourable and exalted of the earth!” But Christ says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, the humble in mind, the meek in temper, the persecuted in the world.” In his religion—the wondrous system of ethical wisdom he propounded—poverty leads the van, and persecution brings up the rear; from which it is evident that every faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus, every scribe and pupil that is instructed by his Master in Israel, is heir to a *cross*, as well as entitled to a *crown*.

Here we may observe how closely the Christian graces are linked together; for he who possesses one, possesses all. He who is *poor* in spirit is a *mourner*: he who *mourns* is *meek*: he who is *meek* is merciful, &c. The graces of the spirit resemble a row of pearls which are suspended on a golden chain to adorn and beautify the spouse of Christ, and to distinguish those who are the heirs of salvation.

In this divine sermon we behold the difference between the promulgation of the law, and the publication of the Gospel. The one was issued with the

severest commands, and the most awful threatenings; amidst thundering and lightning, and the voice of a trumpet; the mountain smoking, and the people trembling through fear. But the other was proclaimed with blessings and promises by the mouth of Him who was gentleness itself—whose lips dropped as the honeycomb—whose doctrine was so sweet, so placid, as to ravish the hearts of all who heard it.

I propose, in this sermon, and in some subsequent discourses, to draw your attention to some of the beatitudes of our religion, and to suggest the improving views and thoughts with which they should be contemplated. I have described the character of the preacher, and the occasion of the discourse on the mount; and to some of the matter of that sermon, it is my present intention to advert for the lasting instruction of my hearers.

The first beatitude in order, as, perhaps, the first in importance, is poorness in spirit, to which I shall, in this and in a subsequent discourse or two, claim your attention. There are four points which the discussion will embrace, of which I shall consider one at present, and the remainder I shall reserve for some future discourses. The length of our previous most beautiful and edifying services is often an impediment to the preacher, and precludes him from investigating fully a subject of importance to which he wishes to direct the attention of his hearers. Hence the discourse must be contracted within proper limits, and not exceed the time usually allotted in the church for the exercises of the pulpit, and whatever some persons may dream, I am free to avow that meagre and unsatisfactory must be any sermon on any great cardinal doctrine of religion which is circumscribed by time, and confines a discourse to twenty minutes duration.

I shall first offer some general observations on the nature of blessedness, and state in what that in particular, of which mention is made in the text, consists.

I shall, secondly, consider that heavenly disposition of soul to which Christ here annexes blessedness, viz., poverty of spirit.

Thirdly, I shall give some marks, or signs, by which you may ascertain if you are among the number of those who are "poor in spirit."

Fourthly, I shall take some notice of the reward which our Lord promises to all such as possess this cardinal and indispensable grace: "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." As I proceed, the proper improvement and application of the subject will be suggested.

May the power of divine grace bring down every haughty and sinful imagination of which our hearts may be possessed, and endue us with that blessed poverty of spirit, which, in the sight of God, is of great price, and to which he has promised a celestial kingdom!

First, in the strength of God, we now proceed to explain THE NATURE OF BLESSEDNESS IN GENERAL, AND TO STATE IN WHAT THAT IN PARTICULAR CONSISTS, TO WHICH REFERENCE IS MADE IN THE TEXT.

Blessedness may be considered, as in truth it is, the perfection of our nature; and its attainment the desire, as it should be, of all men: but its *nature*, and the *way* by which it may be secured, few have rightly understood. Various have been the notions entertained by philosophers with respect to happiness, and so numerous the sentiments to which they have given expression and

development, that, according to one of the fathers (Austin) no less than two hundred and eighty-eight opinions have been holden concerning it, of which it may be observed, that not one has approximated to the truth. Many in ancient, as well as many in modern times, even among professing Christians, have defined it to be, "a sufficiency of all good things, plentiful subsistence, and worldly prosperity." Possessing these, how many may we find who, with the rich fool in the Gospel, say "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry," not considering that there is not a terrestrial garden, nor a forest, nor a field, nor a grove, in which the tree of happiness grows; and that with as great a prospect of success we might expect to produce oil from the flinty rock, as to extract real happiness from terrestrial productions. The truth of this remark is clear and evident, and the most superficial observer must be convinced of its justice, if he will but reflect, for one moment, that nothing in reality possesses the power of rendering a man happy, which is not fully commensurate with the desires of his soul. Now worldly things, being by their nature perishing and transitory, and "no sooner blown than blasted," like the grass of the field, and some sweet flower of the garden, cannot possibly make a man happy. And how should it be otherwise? for worldly enjoyments have nothing real or substantial in them: they are pleasing deceits, and alluring impostors. Nor are they, by any means, *suitable* to the soul of man. The one is spiritual, and of divine origin: the other is of the earth, earthy. How, then, is it possible for riches to satisfy a spiritual intelligence? Not earth, nor sea, nor sky, with all that is rich in their possessions, boundless in their view, and magnificent in their prospect, can impart satisfaction to an immortal soul, until it can hold on its Creator and its God. It is not in the power of sublunary enjoyments to quiet the troubled mind, to heal the wounded spirit, or to soothe the agitated conscience. When God writes bitter things against the sinner; "when his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down" by his indignation and wrath; when conscience, like an armed man, attacks the transgressor, how vain and inefficacious are the oil and the wine of consolation offered by the kindness and sympathy of the creature, to minister to the mind diseased, and to heal the heart which is stung with remorse, and burthened with sin! Ah! how can the golden wedge screen from the fury of the fierce anger of the living God? Did Belshazzar's mirth and banquetting, his wine and women, and the golden vessels of the temple, in which he drank his profane and unhallowed libations, prevent his spirit from being troubled, when he beheld the hand-writing upon the wall? No: "his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other." And what happened to a Belshazzar must and will happen to every sinner: in the midst of his profanations, in the plenitude of his mirth, and in the course of his delinquencies, the terrors of the Lord will be arrayed against him: the same awful manifestations of divine wrath will go forth, the same retributive justice will overtake and smite the profaners of his temple, the violators of his sabbaths, and the despisers of his laws and ordinances. Awake, then, O sinner! arise from thy evil courses, break forth from the unholy contract which thou hast made with sin, and Christ shall give thee light to walk in the sweetness of his paths, and the beauty of his ways.

This indelible character is impressed on all the concerns of the world, and

on all the objects of sense, that, instead of solid comfort and satisfaction, they are like the moth in the garment, they fret and torment us. And if so, with what truth can it be said that they render a man blessed? Worldly riches are compared to wind, to denote their emptiness; and to thorns, to indicate their harassing and vexatious nature. They are wind, because they pass away suddenly and are seen no more. They are thorns, because they torture the mind with many cares in the pursuit, and pierce the heart with many distressing apprehensions lest they should be lost. Without the favour of heaven, they are a curse rather than a blessing, and are often "kept for the owners thereof to their hurt." Riches often pander to the pride, and are as fuel for the lust, of their possessors, yea, a snare and a temptation, leading many to perdition and ruin. How many, like Judas, have sold their salvation for money; and, like the Pharisees, have therewith purchased their damnation! "How hard is it for them *that trust* in riches to enter into the kingdom of God."

Besides these indisputable facts, worldly honours and riches have nothing which is permanent in them. They last but for a season; and often a short one too. Can they, then, render a man, at any time, truly blessed? Never: he who is as Dives to-day may be as the poor beggar, bereft of every thing, to-morrow; and by some reverse of fortune and accident of life, be, as Lazarus, compelled to wait at the rich man's door, a pitiless but unsuccessful applicant. Riches—the truth is exemplified daily in the bankrupt fortunes and scattered possessions of the once wealthy and gainful trader in this great commercial city—"riches make to themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle towards heaven." They are still in flight; they pass quickly like a rapid stream; they glide through the ocean of life, like the ship in full sail on the great and wide sea; they are bandied about from one to another; and no sooner do they make their salutation, than they take their departure. How then is it possible that such passing and uncertain things should make a rational soul happy!

But it is not from theory only, but it is from experiment (which, as my Lord Bacon has observed, is the test of truth), that we are taught the utter inability of all earthly things to render a man really blessed. As a proof, let us turn our attention for one moment to a consideration of the wisest, the richest, the most magnificent potentate that ever wore the regal diadem, and swayed the destinies of empires. And what was Solomon? He was of royal lineage; his seat of government was fixed in the first metropolis of the world, which, for the splendour of its buildings, and the extent and magnificence of its tabernacles, was called "the city of God." As for gold, silver, jewels, pearls, spices, and precious things, no man ever possessed them in such profusion. Silver was as abundant as the stones in the streets of Jerusalem, and was nothing accounted of in "the days of Solomon." No pleasure; nothing, in short, which could minister to the senses and give delight to the heart was wanting to consummate his felicity, and render his enjoyments complete: sumptuous fare—stately palaces—a throne of ivory and gold—a multitude of attendants—horses and chariots—music of all kinds, with every joy of which the heart of man is capable—and, what was more excellent than all these attributes of wealth, and panderers to enjoyment, his wisdom far surpassed that of the wisest of the children of men of whom history has transmitted the record. He had a key of knowledge, by which he could open the darkest cabinets of nature, and unravel the most intricate parts of science; and such were the rare and

exquisite endowments with which he was privileged, that, to the carnal beholder, he appeared to be invested more with the attributes of some superior intelligence, than with the qualifications of a mere ordinary mortal. Surely it may be pronounced that one so much above the common level, in the splendour of his wealth, the extent of his sovereignty, and the range and powers of his intellect, must have been blessed. Was it really the case with him? No; the feeling of his heart corresponded with the declaration of his lips, and with the experience of mankind, that the world, with all the riches it gave, all the honours it bestowed, and all the pleasures it possessed, was nothing but "vanity and vexation of spirit!"

Hence it is evident that blessedness is a jewel which is not to be found in all the treasures of nature. If this be true, it will be but lost labour to search for it; we shall but mis-spend our time, and waste our talents in the pursuit. Strange, my brethren, that men should be so infatuated as to seek that which is not, as to grasp at a shadow, to catch at the world, as though the pearl of blessedness adorned an earthly crown, or was to be found in any situation below, however relatively high, or comparatively happy. "Give me such a sum of money" is the language of one: "Give me such an estate" is the language of another, "and happiness will be mine—I shall be amply satisfied." In the dispensations of God, perhaps, the wishes of the one are realized, and the object of the other is gained. But is their happiness complete? After the charm of novelty has passed, are they still content? Are no other wants felt, and no other desires cherished? Do they centre in present possessions the ease and tranquillity of their minds, and do their thoughts never wander on other objects, nor their hearts pant for other acquisitions? Alas! all the comforts derived from the creature are vain and unsatisfactory. They have no character of permanence and durability stamped upon them, and it is wisely ordained that it should be so. For were it otherwise, our desires would never be raised above them, nor should we much concern ourselves to seek after more noble, more satisfactory, more lasting and abiding enjoyments.

But where then is the true blessedness of which our Lord speaks to be found? The answer is, in the possession and fruition of the chief good; and that is, in God alone. In whatever gives real blessedness to the soul there must be a superior worth and excellence, as well as a sensible enjoyment in its possession. But nothing on earth is of even equal value with the human soul: the world is vastly below it and therefore nothing in the world can render it happy. Nothing is more excellent, except the supreme good, which is God. Possessing Him, we possess every thing. "Happy then is the people whose God is the Lord." That only can make the soul happy in which she can rest, and in which she delights. Now God is expressly called, the "soul's rest\*," and in him she finds that sweetness, with which she is not only delighted, but ravished. Fulness is likewise a necessary ingredient in blessedness; for a scanty draught will not allay the thirst of an immortal soul. In God only is an inexhaustible fulness; and he makes all who come unto him, "to drink of the rivers of his pleasures;" to bathe in the chrystal streams of living water, of which the property is, not to refresh and heal only, but to "fill with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." In fine, God is every thing to the soul that is in him. He is a sun to enlighten our way—he is a shield to defend us from our

\* Psalms cxvi. 7.

foes—a rock to shelter us in the heat of temptation—a support in the hour of trouble—a comforter in the season of sorrow—a horn of salvation, and an everlasting portion to his people. In Him is concentrated every excellence; and from Him new sources of joy continually spring up. The sunshine of a believer's blessedness is never enveloped in clouds and darkness; nor does the darkness of night terminate his lightsome day! Of all his children Christ thus speaks: "I have blessed them, and they shall be blessed: I have given them eternal life; and their joy no man taketh away: they shall for ever be with the Lord." Thus doth eternity complete the blessedness of the "poor in spirit!"

That there is such blessedness reserved for the saints, and that there "remaineth a rest for the people of God," are truths of which every follower of the Lord Jesus Christ ought to be fully persuaded; and, likewise, that he himself is capable of attaining to the one, and of enjoying the other. The future happiness of believers should be the subject of his frequent and serious meditation. A theme of this kind, upon which his thoughts are incessantly exercised, would have the happiest tendency to wean his heart from this world—to dissolve his connexion with time—to break off his sins by repentance and cause the most earnest pursuit after that blessedness which is promised to all who live godly in Christ Jesus.

And if we really believe in future blessedness, we shall manifest the efficacy, and the living power, and the embodying influence of that belief, by seeking after an interest in God, the supreme good. We shall seek a close union with our Divine Head, through whom alone we can be truly blessed. We shall likewise proclaim it to the world, not by professions of godliness, or protestations of faith, but by the holiness of our lives, and the consistency of our pursuits; by abjuring every sin, and by renouncing every alliance, which can disturb our peace, or endanger our happiness; for certain it is, that the crown of blessedness shall never be the reward of a wicked and ungodly life. Such as bless themselves in their sins shall never be blessed in heaven. If, saith God, the sinner "bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man\*." Hear ye this, ye that profane the hallowed name, and break the sabbath-day, of the Lord; ye who swear by the one, and desecrate the other. Ye drunkards, and ye reprobate ones, pause ye, and dream not that ye are sailing to heaven while ye are thus under the pilotage of the Devil, and are steering a course as different as the east is from the west, or the poles the one from the other. A beast could as soon fill an angel's place, as a soul, covered over and spotted with the leprosy of sin, could dwell in the celestial mansions. Nor let the covetous man, who, like the worm, is always creeping on the earth in search of its shining dust, and its thick clay, think that he hath a claim to the blessedness of the Gospel of Jesus; for earth cannot ascend to heaven with the dross of impurity and sin, nor a lump of clay become as a bright star in the firmament of glory! Let those, therefore, who would secure this promised felicity, dedicate themselves wholly unto the Lord, rejoicing to spend, and to be spent in his service, never thinking that any thing they have done, or can do, can be sufficient for a Being to whom they are indebted for

\* Deut xxix. 19, 20.

such countless instances of beneficence and love ; but let them be always aspiring after higher attainments of grace, and displaying, from day to day, greater ardour and intensity of feeling in his service, that they may finally be found worthy of " the kingdom of heaven."

Having now offered some general remarks upon the nature of the Beatitude mentioned in my text, the next point for consideration is that heavenly disposition of soul to which our Lord has annexed a blessing. And this I shall reserve as the subject of the next Sermon.

But let us not depart this night from the sanctuary of our God without an improving appropriation of what has been said to ourselves. Let us fervently and unostentatiously implore the gracious giver of every good and perfect gift that the gift of blessedness may be ours ; that if we have it not, we may ardently pursue it, and never rest satisfied until this pearl of inestimable value be found. When, then, you retire hence, retire to some secret and hallowed spot, and there pray that the spirit of God would enlighten and direct you to its attainment ; and give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till the rational and well-founded hope is your's, that the petition will be granted, and the blessing be conferred. Nor doubt it, that if poor in spirit, contrite in prayer, and firm in faith, yours will be the kingdom of heaven. **Even so Lord Jesus let it be. Amen.**

## THE FORGIVING POWER OF GOD.

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REV. J. H. EVANS, A.M.

JOHN STREET CHAPEL, KING'S ROAD, APRIL 10, 1836.

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“ God hath spoken once ; twice have I heard this ; that power belongeth unto God.”

PSALM lxii. 11.

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THESE are very remarkable words ; the manner in which the verse begins is striking and solemn. If God speaks *once*, let all the world stand in awe ; but here we have this remarkable addition—“ God hath spoken once ; *twice* have I heard this.” It introduces the main subject with a peculiar solemnity—“ Power belongeth unto God.” It is not said that God *hath* power, but it “ *belongeth* unto him :” it is his *property*, it is his *peculiar* property, it is his *pre-eminent* and *exclusive* property. So in the passage which I read this morning (Daniel, ix), when the prophet says, “ O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our Fathers, because we have sinned against thee,” he adds, “ To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness though we have rebelled against him.” Laying down these two truths—*our* property is *shame*, because we have sinned ; *God's* property is *forgiveness*, because he is God.

We do not deny that angels have strength ; they “ excel” in strength ; one of them smote a hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrians in one night. But the strength of *all* God's creatures is as nothing compared with His. *Theirs* is but a *derived* strength ; *his* is *uncommunicated*—it is from himself ; *theirs* is a *changeable* strength, the God who gave it to them can in one moment withdraw it from them : the power that is with GOD is a power as immutable as his throne—existing of necessity, and therefore as necessary as his glory. The power of all his creatures is but a finite power ; but the power of GOD is an infinite power ; it enables him to do all that he wishes to do, and all that is consonant with his own glory to do. It is the power of *strength*, before whom stands no opposition : it is the power of *wisdom*, which subdues all to his will : it is the power of *love* which melteth the most obdurate heart, and conformeth it unto himself : it is *Almighty power*.

We purpose now to consider this perfection as connected with the pardon of sin ; and I would regard the subject in a three-fold point of view : first, there was an infinite power put forth in the *person* of the Redeemer ; secondly, it was displayed in his great *work* ; and, thirdly, it is equally displayed in applying the benefit of that work to the heart and conscience of the sinner. May the Holy Ghost put forth his power in *our* hearts and consciences ! If you ask how we are to know it, I reply, It is by our being brought to the foot of the



cross of Jesus, and sitting there in our right minds, saying, "Lord, speak, and thy servant will hear."

In the first place, THERE WAS INFINITE POWER PUT FORTH IN THE REDEEMER'S PERSON. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? He to whom power belongeth, and only he. This is a deeply important subject, one on which the church of God has been more exercised during the last ten years perhaps than in any previous period, because a new heresy has sprung up, and thereby many have their minds confused, and their consciences debased. Sometimes the timid ones among God's saints are much opposed to any thing that looks like a standing up for truth, lest they bring with it a spirit that is contrary to that truth. May we never forget that whatever is contrary to the truth is from beneath, and that our only safe posture for entering into the truth is in the meekness of that truth which we profess to love. Not that I shall enter at all into the other opinion, but only state, in a few words, what is the truth, as it seems to me, which is in Jesus.

The law of God threatens death upon the transgressor: "The soul that sinneth it shall die." That law, as exhibited in the legal covenant, holds out an exhibition of another suffering instead of the transgressor; otherwise whence the necessity of continued victims and offerings of blood day by day? But yet the sanctity and purity of the law demands this—that there should be that union between the sinner and the victim that the Saviour should suffer in the person of the victim, so that he should suffer though in the person of another. This unfolds the great truth, that God has appointed for our Redeemer, our Goel, who is not merely our Redeemer, but our *kinsman* Redeemer, who stood forward as the great head of his seed, and died as the great surety of his seed; the doctrine of *substitution*. the great head, the great Goel, bearing all iniquity and all transgression in his own person, did undertake for his seed, and did suffer in the behalf of his seed, "to bring," as the Apostle tells us, "many sons unto glory."

But there were other apparent difficulties in the way. He who suffered must be a *man*: he must not be a newly created thing; he must not be of another race: he must be completely and entirely of the race that sinned. Yet he must be a *pure* man; there must be in him not only no *act* of sin, but no *sinful nature*. The law of God as much demands sanctity of nature as it does sanctity of conduct; as much requires essential, spotless purity, as active purity. Now here was the difficulty—he must be a man of the same race, and yet a pure man. This wonder of wonders infinite power contrived; and the expression made use of in Luke, i. 35, seems to imply as much: "The angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." Observe the perfection which is here specially alluded to; it is "the *power* of the Highest." The Holy Ghost never makes use of words which are not full of meaning and importance. It was a great display of Jehovah's infinite power in bringing forth, as it were, that holy thing in a virgin, herself impure, uncontaminated by her, a pure and holy thing. God declared it to be so, and that it should be called, "The Son of God." Here, then, were these difficulties removed; here was a man of the same race; here was a pure and holy man.

Some of you may be inclined to ask, "What importance is there in these

things?" Why was that written by God the Eternal Spirit?—that is the simple answer to the question. If he wrote it, he wrote it that you and I might study it, enter into the holy tendency of it, and contend meekly, though earnestly, for the faith once delivered to the saints.

But there was still another difficulty: this man must have an infinite dignity. And how can we predicate that of a finite being? That infinite dignity could only exist by union with an infinite being: and hence it is believed that the infinite power of God was gloriously displayed in the person of the Beloved. That union of infinite with finite, eternity and time, God and the creature, that wonder of wonders that leaves all other wonders behind, is unfolded as a glorious display of God's unutterable power.

My brethren, so great is that mystery of godliness, that I never like to go one hair's-breadth beyond the divine record. We hear some talk about it the same as if they had been let into the very secrets of the divine bosom. But I simply believe it as I read it; I take it as God's word because it is God's word: and I find it safe to stop where the sacred record stops, and not to travel beyond "Thus saith the living God." Thus, while I can venerate men who see no difficulty in human creeds; while I can respect them, and in many respects sit at their feet, yet I dare to say this, that I cannot invest the word of God with the creeds of men; I dare not take any man for my master in such a doctrine as this of the incarnate God—a truth full of sweetness, a truth full of power. Well might the Apostle say, "Great is the mystery of godliness: finite and infinite, time and eternity, united in the person of our glorious Immanuel!

Now here was the difficulty got rid of. Here was a *man*, a man of the *same race* with that which had transgressed, a pure man, and who, in consequence of his union with Deity, had infinite dignity, glory, majesty, beauty, and that to all eternity. Here then was the display of that power which belongeth to God, and so completely was that power exhibited, and so wondrously was it put forth, that we may say of our Lord, though *in* himself and *of* himself "over all, God blessed for ever," independently and essentially God, as truly God as the Father and the Eternal Spirit—yet we may say, and say fairly, so that the acts of our Lord are to be considered so that we may speak of him as now living at the right hand of God, and in all that he doeth never lose for one moment that he is our incarnate God.

But now observe, secondly, there is an infinite power IN THE WORK OF OUR BELOVED LORD. An infinite power was put forth in his work. Nothing is more trifling in the eyes of men than sin: a few ejaculations—"God be merciful, I will do better for the time to come;" determinations formed in their own strength; and thinking that if they weep on their death-beds it is quite enough to move the heart of God to forgive them; that if they can express a little sorrow, and especially if they can say, "I have no hope but in Christ," though, at the same time, their hearts are unchanged, their nature unrenewed, and they are dead in sins. It is awfully absurd to see the trifle which the natural man esteems sin to be. But not so with God. It was a terrible work in which he was engaged. Talk of deep views of sin—if you and I had our hearts engaged on the cross of Christ, and had a full, broad view of that cross, what mourning after sin should we experience in the midst of the joy of the Holy Ghost! It was a dreadful work, a work which broke the very humanity asunder; it was a

cleft and a riven rock. Do you wonder to see our Lord in the garden, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood, exclaiming, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" If he had not felt it he had not been man; if he had repined he had been a sinful man: but because he felt and acquiesced he was a holy man; and there is not the slightest murmuring in one thought of his heart. Do I wonder to see him fainting beneath the weight of his cross? Do I wonder to hear that bitter cry—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Do I wonder to see him "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief?" Do I wonder to see his couch wetted with his tears? Do I wonder to see his countenance marred so that they thought him an old man, yet he was not forty years old? Do I wonder at these things? No. I can wonder at none of them when I think what that tremendous work was in which he was occupied, and that dreadful fight which he was called upon to wage. Had our Lord been any thing else than what he was—had he not the in-dwelling Deity to support the humanity—were he not as truly God as he was truly man—had he not been infinite as well as finite—had he not been the Creator as well as the creature—he must have sunk beneath the intolerable burden never to have risen more: he must (awful thought!) have been drinking out, drop by drop, to all eternity, the bitter cup of God's wrath; and never would it all have been drunk: he must have ever been satisfying, and never satisfied, always doing the work, and never accomplishing it. O think of this, ye who are thinking of going to heaven without him; who have your backs turned toward him, who are living in your sins, who are living in the world, who are living in the region of self; think of these awful words—that had he not been God as well as man, he must have been drinking, drop by drop, to all eternity, out of that cup of God's wrath, and never could have come to the last of it. And this he did because he was God: in one draught he took it up, he satisfied God's wrath, he quenched the flames of his justice, he magnified his law, he crucified sin, he dethroned Satan, he enthroned the living God in the hearts of his people: but that wondrous wonder of wonders, that great, that stupendous glory of his, that work that had for its support in-dwelling Deity.

But I must observe, thirdly, that IT REQUIRES THE SAME ALMIGHTY POWER TO APPLY THAT PARDON TO THE CONSCIENCE OF THE SINNER. I sometimes talk with some who appear as if they thought every man is convinced of sin. I wish I could see it. Every man convinced of sin! "O," they say, "man wants but to have the remedy put before him." I must say, in answer to this, that I talk with but very few convinced sinners. I can hear men *talk* of sin, and *reason* of sin. Does not the drunkard, do you think, know something of the bitterness of drunkenness? See his trembling hands, and his parched lips! What is the woe that the Holy Ghost describes? "Who hath woe?" Why the man that goes on in sin; and this is one sin, which frequently finds out the man by the bitterness of it, even in this world; yet he is as spiritually ignorant of it as a corpse; as spiritually ignorant of it as the rock on which he stands. It is the work of the Holy Ghost to make a man sensible of his need of pardon: it seems but trifling with the sinner to say, "Why do you not believe in Christ?" Why the reason is, because he believes in *himself*. But our first concern is, not to sow amongst thorns, not to build among rubbi-h. The Holy Ghost taketh down before he buildeth up; he layeth a man's hopes in the dust

before he unfoldeth the true ground of hope, which is in the Lord Jesus Christ I therefore believe, it is the Spirit's great work, his own work, a work requiring Omnipotence to achieve it, to bring the poor sinner to that state that he taketh his iniquity, and standeth just where the publican stood—"God be merciful to me a sinner." But when the soul is convinced of its inward plague, who can bring in a ray of hope to that poor convinced soul? We can talk of the promises; we can give them "Clarke on the Promises;" our tongues can run over the sweet promises of our God; but who is it brings it home to the heart? Who is it makes it as sweet music to the ears? Who is it causes it to distil as the dew upon the new-mown grass? The word of God says, "I create peace; peace to them which are afar off, and to them which are nigh." He speaks of it as a work of creation; he speaks of it as as great a work as that when he said, "Let there be light, and there was light." And so it is, and we are told the truth of this continually. We reason with burdened souls; we reason with troubled consciences: we see how much legality, we see how much self-righteousness, how much depth of despair there is to be found in their souls. We place before them the various reasons; we are convinced they are incontrovertible, unanswerable; yet they pass over their minds, just as the feeble breath over the polished mirror. But when the Spirit of God brings the word to the heart, how sweet and blessed is the change; when the freeness and fulness of the grace of Christ are placed before the sinner; when he rises up out of his region of misgivings, doubts, and uncertainties, and sees a free, a full, and finished salvation in the person and work of the Lord Jesus; that there is a free welcome to all comers; that there is in the Gospel that which reaches the poorest, the meanest, and the vilest, that come; a table spread, and broadly spread; and for whom? For paupers, for those who have nothing; not who *bring* nothing, who *offer* nothing; but who *have* nothing; and they *know* they have nothing, and they come and take what the Lord freely gives. O my beloved, it is as great a work to bring home peace to the conscience, as it is to quiet the soul under heavy affliction, as at the first moment when God said, "Let there be light, and there was light."

Does not the Psalmist so speak in the fifty-first Psalm: "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." He speaks of it as a great work, as a new creation: he speaks of it as another new creation, when the soul is revived, when the spirit is cheered, when the blessed truths of the Gospel are brought into the heart by the omnipotent agency of God the Eternal Spirit. And who is it the Apostle speaks of as bringing in justification, sanctification, and the true washing? "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. vi. 11.) My brethren, how true it is that not one sanctifying truth can ever be applied to our hearts, but by the same blessed Spirit that quickened us from a death in trespasses and sins; that all the effect and sanctifying tendency of the truths of the Gospel, are as much the effect of his power as regeneration itself. It requireth the same divine energy to speak peace to my conscience, and to fill my heart with the love of God, as at the first, when he said, "Quicken that dead sinner," as to say to Lazarus, "Come forth."

There are some important truths which seem to present themselves from this subject.

If infinite power was demanded in the great work of our pardon, then *what a rock you and I have for our souls, if we are settled on the Lord Jesus Christ and his finished work!* Every thing else may change; every object around us may vary. How much of our own enjoyments may vary, I need not appeal to the hearts of God's saints to answer. But here lies the strength of our confidence, that if through the grace of God our souls are built, not upon ourselves, not upon our experience, not upon our notions, not upon mere opinion, but freely and truly upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, heaven and earth may pass away, but that man's hope shall never pass away, because his foundation is on a rock. O blessed truth—indwelling Deity the support of your souls! True you say, "Never were sins more to be deplored than mine are to be deplored." I so believe that, my brother, that I do not conceive thou knowest a thousandth part of the evil there is in thy sins. But this I tell thee, if God be true and his word be true, and thou hast been led by the eternal Spirit to build thy soul's hopes upon the Lord Jesus Christ, heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall never pass away; he that buildeth upon that rock buildeth for eternity. Infinite strength is in it; Omnipotence keeps it firm: the storm may beat, and the tempest may howl, and all the changes of season may assail the rock and thee; but inasmuch as the unwrought work, by which thou art led to build thy soul's hopes upon the Lord Jesus Christ is of God, and the work itself is God's work, it standeth, and will stand, when all that we now exhibit of poor dying mortality shall be seen no more, and when these hands shall be mouldering in the dust, and this tongue shall be silent in the grave, and this voice shall be heard no more, and you that hear me, and I with you, shall be swept away like the early dew—yet building upon this rock, blessed be God, we build on heaven, and we build for eternity.

Remember, too, that there is a power in God concerning forgiveness, which I have hardly yet touched upon; nor shall I enlarge upon it, lest it should lead me from my main subject. It is, that God has *the only right* to forgive; it is his peculiar power that he exercises forgiveness, and he exercises it as a God. You and I forgive as men. If we are renewed we forgive as renewed men. But God forgiveth as God, in all the magnificence of his own nature. He forgiveth too, not by halves, not grudgingly, not coldly, not with secret misgiving, as if he said, "I will remember thee for this by and bye, in years to come:" he forgiveth absolutely, he forgiveth freely, he forgiveth gloriously, because he is God.

Now, so convinced am I of the true nature of this truth, with regard to its holy tendency; that I could suppose a poor creature to have been brought within these walls to-day, heavy laden, grieving, mourning, desponding; but such a man thinking that God is at peace with him, that God pardons him through God's rich grace, having a rich view of the atoning blood, and the Spirit of God put forth in his power in sprinkling that blood upon his conscience, he shall go home another man. And perhaps his wife may say to him, "How art thou changed! Thou comest home meek, lowly, pure in spirit, gentle and tender; thou comest home as if thou art a new man." He has seen and known God's forgiving love in Christ Jesus. You ask me how is this application made? It is a very solemn question; but I would endeavour thus to speak:

Is there any one on earth whom you have offended, and who you think beareth a grudge against you? You misinterpret his looks; you imagine him cold and unforgiving; he calls on you—you may say *you* call on *him*; *God's* way is that *he* calls upon *you*; you too, however, seek him in a broken and contrite spirit; *he* has first called upon *you*; you tell him your heart; you open your sin; you tell him you have sinned against him in thought, word, and deed: he assures you it is as much gone as if it had never been committed: he assures you—gives his own word—that he never will remember it against you in thought any more. You believe the word, and you go to your home; as the word is applied to your souls you go to your homes in peace. The free grace of the Gospel is heard; the Spirit of God giveth faith to receive it; the understanding is enlightened into its real import, the affections are moved through the understanding; and thus we love God, because God first loved us.

This great putting forth of God's power will more slay a man's sins, more crucify him to the world, more lift him up in principle, more act as a mighty lever to give him spirituality of mind, deadness to himself, deadness to sin, and more quicken you as it regards the true standard of real holiness, than if you were to study all the precepts beneath Mount Sinai for a thousand years. I remember one word of that dear good man of God, Owen—"One real going forth of the soul in communion with God, through a view of the atoning blood will more crucify a man to sin, than all the power of self-resolution for a thousand ages." I believe it as I believe God to be true.

But the subject has a holy influence in this respect: Does the Holy Ghost put forth his power in thus applying the truth? Remember it is your privilege and my privilege, to be *always waiting on him*. Remember it requireth omnipotence to apply divine truth; that it requireth the putting forth of God's own power on our own hearts, the divine energy of God, the Eternal Spirit, to bring home that truth with power to our hearts and consciences. And what does this say? It admonishes us to be men of prayer; to be men of reading of God's word; to be men that turn over the page of conscience; to see God's power in God's way—the administration of God's power in a way that God's wisdom has appointed; and thus being found secretly waiting and hoping in God, your souls shall not be found stripped of all that was laid against them.

What a word of sweet encouragement it is to us in remembering, that *God's power is engaged in all that concerns us*. O had I time and had I power I would enlarge on this truth. How often have I found myself throwing blame upon circumstances! How often have I thought, "O if I had but a small congregation in the country; and delivered from the pressure of that load on the heart in town; where I could more easily and quietly be with God! All this comes from Satan; for when God places us in any situation, there is grace enough in Christ for that situation: and there is enough of power in God's Eternal Spirit to make a man a gainer by his losses, and stronger in his weakness. So that in vain do you say, "O that I were more removed from the centre of my occupation; that I were delivered from that pressure that is my every-day curse!"

Let me say, by way of parenthesis, *do not make your own pressure*; do not make your own crosses; do not run into temptation, and then say, "Lord deliver me;" do not run into the fire, and then say, "God, save me from the effects of it:" but look well and see if it be God's way you are walking in.

Then, thou wouldst be a loser, and not a gainer, if thou wast taken out from thy present circumstances; for the very circumstances that press thee nearer to God are the very circumstances that God sanctifies to our real good and spiritual welfare. O, then, is God almighty? Walk before him; walk as in his eye; walk as under his heart: "Walk before me," says God, "and be thou perfect; I am God Almighty." Enough for all things terrestrial; enough for all things bodily; enough for spiritual; enough for life, and enough in death.

The words are words of deep solemnity, as they bear on the men that hear me who are strangers to God. O you despise the great exhibition of the power of God; I am sure you do. Creation shews much; I acknowledge it: Providence shews more; I acknowledge it: but the work of all works that displays the power of God, is the work of redemption, the law magnified, justice glorified, the soul sheathed, sin dethroned; and yet thy whole life is one act of contempt. Yes, you ask me, Who they are that despise it? Why all careless sinners; all prayerless sinners, all lovers of the world, and lovers of pleasure, and lovers of sin—cursers, swearers, blasphemers, fornicators, sabbath-breakers, and liars—they all despise the power of God. I tell it you as before the eternal majesty of God, I tell it you as with my eye fixed on the eternal world, I tell it you as before his eye—I care for your dying souls; and I say, Can you forget that this God is an omnipotent God? Canst thou arm thyself against him? Who art thou that despisest the power of God? O that as thou goest to thy home thou mayest think this: "If that power is not put forth in my salvation, that power is the axe that will be my destruction throughout an endless eternity." Go, then, to thy home; humble yourself under the Almighty hand of God. It is an awful thing to trifle with God; and thy whole life hitherto has been one act of despising God.

May the God of all grace, the Father of all mercy, give unto us to know more, and feel more, the power of this blessed truth in our hearts, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this: that power belongeth unto God."

HOLINESS OF LIFE.

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“WHAT reward shall I give to the Lord for his mighty marvellous loving-kindness to this earthly body? These eyes, if they be admitted into heaven, will look upon the holiness of the Lamb—will see the brightness of his glory—marvel at the majesty of his Deity—and almost be blinded in the excessive glories of the heavenly host. Shall I, then, fix these eyes upon the vain and unholy objects of the earth? And shall I fill them with intemperance, cruelty, lust, and so unfit them for the contemplation of the spiritual splendour of God’s unblemished purity? These ears—they are hereafter to listen to the harps of the angels, to hear the unceasing songs of gratitude of the redeemed; shall I turn them away, then, from this their holiest and most honourable occupation, and bid them drink in with greedy readiness the tempting accents of the charmer who would charm me from the ways of righteousness? Or shall I let them unhallow my soul by being open to the deceitfulness of that philosophy which would take away my heart, and destroy its delicacy by listening to the voice of wit, and jesting, and licentious thoughts? Shall I take the members which are predestined to the holy office of serving before God’s unblemished throne, and make them the members of a harlot, the instruments of uncleanness, and the slaves of vice and licentiousness? Shall this tongue which is hereafter to cry out with all the saints, ‘Glory and blessing, honour and praise, be for ever and ever to the Lamb that sitteth on the throne,’ shall I degrade my tongue by lying, by deceit, by licentious conversation? Shall I corrupt the tongue which is to praise God, into impurity, and blasphemy, and slander, and riotous mirth? Shall that which is intended for a blessing in heaven, be made on earth the instrument of cursing? Shall these hands which are to be lifted up to God in his holy place, be taught the ways of wickedness, of theft, and murder, and cruelty, and revenge, on earth? Shall these organs of life, which are to eat and drink in the presence of the Lord, be corrupted with gluttony and drunkenness? Shall any one part of that body which shall hereafter converse with angels, which hath been honoured with the indwelling of the Divinity which now rules in heaven—shall that body be converted into a temple of God’s worst enemy, and of man’s worst enemy, and the worst enemy of all that is happy and good—the prince of darkness, the author of misery, and of all that is miserable, and vile, and guilty, and to be despised? God forbid. The body is to be the Lord’s; and as the body is to be the Lord’s let it glorify the Lord. Let me be doing while I can, and as long as I can. Fasting is hard; yet, if meat offend my God, I will eat no meat as long as I live. If he require chastity, I will give it. If he ask temperance, I will check my appetites; if purity, why I will even close my eyes lest they should look on the cause of temptation. In all things, since God has given us such a glorious hope, I will endeavour to sanctify myself, through grace, for the great end of my calling, the entire devotedness both of my body and soul, that both my body and soul may be fitted to stand up in his holy presence, being justified, washed, and glorified by the blood of my Saviour, Jesus Christ. —REV. C. BENSON, A.M



## CHRISTIAN EXAMPLES.

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REV. W. JAY,

SURREY CHAPEL, MARCH 27. 1836.

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“ That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”—HEBREWS, vi. 12.

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THERE are a great variety of books in the world. Some of them are blameable enough, tending only to produce infidelity, profligacy, and wretchedness in the world. Some are of a character to do neither good nor evil; unless indeed by the harm they occasion in consuming the time in writing and reading them. Some are addressed to our fancy and feelings, and afford entertainment: some treat of the arts and sciences, adding to the dignity of our race, and ministering to the improvement and comfort of human life.

But here is the Book of books; no work can be compared with this. This book is written by the finger of God, and God himself has “ magnified his word above all his name.” Here we have all truth without error; and all good without evil. Here we have a standard of faith and a rule of worship; the foundation of our hopes and the charter of our everlasting privileges; the map of the region of the city of life? It addresses every passion of our bosom, and every principle of our nature. Here we have histories to charm our attention, doctrines to enlighten our understanding, commands to regulate our conduct, motives to awaken us, threatenings to alarm, promises to encourage, and, to approach our subject, examples to excite. And is there a person here this morning but has felt the truth of the common adage, that “ Example is above precept?” The principal of these examples is indeed the example of the Lord of life and glory; he who is “ the image of the invisible God, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” But, in subordination to this, the Scriptures abound with other examples, also variously useful. We have the example of the servants as well as of the Master, of the disciples as well as of the Lord: and hence, says the Apostle, in the passage before us, “ Be not slothful, but followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.”

We must keep five things in view this morning: we must first endeavour to ascertain OUR MODELS. Whom are we to follow? Them “ who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” But who are they? The Apostle generally refers to the patriarchs, and he particularly alludes to Abraham with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, for “ they looked for the city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” “ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare

plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." With these men, my brethren, we have an intimate connexion, remotely as they lived from us as to time and place: "They that are of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham." Now we, then, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed, and was immediately knighted on the field, and surnamed by the name of Israel; and such honour have all the saints; he never said of the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain." "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and be glorified. Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation."

You are told that when the beggar died he was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom: and our Lord said, upon the conversion of the centurion, "Many shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God;" all forming one family, all living together in our heavenly Father's house, where there are many mansions.

"The saints on earth, and all the dead,  
But one communion make,  
All join in Christ, their living Head,  
And of his grace partake."

Passing over successive generations, passing by princes, and heroes, and statesmen, and scholars, the Apostle goes back to the very early ages of the new world, and points us to a small company of rustics and shepherds, distinguished only by their communion with God, and their obedience to him. Yes, but this is every thing in the view of the Supreme Being, and it should be so in our estimation too; and we hope the days are coming when men will be judged, not by their adventitiousness, but by their real worth, by their intellectual, moral, and religious character, when, in our eyes, vile persons, however rich, shall be condemned, and we shall honour them that fear the Lord, however poor. For the righteous are the excellent of the earth; they are more excellent than their neighbours: it is for them that kingdoms are preserved or delivered from judgment—it is for them God confers and continues blessings—it is for them that the earth itself is in being. They are called, observe, "repairers of the breach, restorers of places to dwell in," and though they were destitute, tormented, and afflicted, the world was not worthy of them. Hence, though Moses when he came to years had the choice of being called Pharaoh's son-in-law, the son of Pharaoh's daughter, yet "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Hence David, though a musician, a poet, a hero, a lawgiver, a king, a prophet, yet prayed, "Lord remember me with the favour thou bearest to thy people." What am I saying? Why even Balaam exclaimed, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." These men lived also under a dispensation very inferior to our own: while we are the children of the day, they hardly had the dawn; and yet such was their improvement of their means and privileges, that

they are deemed, you see, by inspiration, worthy to be held forth as an example to us unto whom the ends of the world are come. We cannot judge of men solely by their situation and external advantages. I have known plants of righteousness fixed in a very unfavourable soil, yet bringing forth more of the fruits of righteousness, than some who were planted in the house of the Lord, and flourished in the courts of our God. I believe some of the Jews who attended the temple in the splendid days of Solomon were not to be compared with Daniel, and Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, though they were only captives in a strange land. Many of those who live under the Gospel economy, never reach, I am persuaded, the spirituality, the devotion, the benevolence and zeal of some of those who lived under the law, and not under grace. The mother who implored the Saviour on the behalf of her daughter, and the centurion who implored the Lord on the behalf of his son, these were not Israelites; and yet with regard to each of them our Saviour said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." So some have become scholars who were never at school, while others, as Cowper says,

"Schools have dismissed and colleges untaught."

Thus the first shall be last, and the last first. You will observe, also that these men had their faults and their infirmities, and are never represented in the Scriptures as perfect. But then you see, from the language of the Apostle, their imperfections are not to render us insensible to their excellences; the evil in them is not to hinder us from following the good that was in them. He has a low, base, envious mind, who is always seeking to discover defects, and who loves to develop and display them. When we find an excellent character, we should admire it as a whole, and never try to take it to pieces. You may be assured that that man has no genius himself who cannot read a work of genius with relish, because he can discover an erratum or a deficiency. Turn to the Scriptural account of those worthies; there you will find that God's most eminent servants all had their imperfections, and that they were imperfect in those things that constituted, comparatively, their completeness. But how does God deal with them? Abraham's faith once failed him, and induced him to use prevarication: but yet God has called him "the father of the faithful." Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips; yet he is called "the meekest man upon earth." Job cursed the day of his birth; yet, said God, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." Sara laughed, and denied the accusation, and only uttered one good word on a certain occasion; and this the Holy Spirit has recorded to her honour; "Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." You have been reading the address of our Saviour to the seven churches in Asia; have you never remarked, how in each case he seems to labour to find something to eulogize, before he is constrained to condemn? May the same mind be in us which was also in him.

Having ascertained our models, we must, in the second place, consider **THEIR PRESENT CONDITION**, which is *the enjoyment of the inheritance*. They "inherit the promises." God from the beginning has dealt with his people in a way of promise. He could, you know, have accomplished all the purposes of

his mercy and grace in their behalf without having previously announced them. But then, do you not perceive, that they could not have *known* them; they could not have *believed* in them; they could not have *hoped* for them, and pleaded them in prayer; they could not have made them their song in the house of their pilgrimage.

Many advantages are derived from the promises; some even in time. Indeed, some of these promises regard the life that now is; but many more of them regard that which is to come. Few of the promises of God, indeed, are ever completely accomplished in this world: they draw us, therefore, forward and upward. We are saved in hope; we rejoice in hope; heaven will fill up every void; heaven will perfect every thing that concerns us. Heaven will perfect the *intellectual life*. "Here we see through a glass darkly; then we shall see face to face: now we know in part; then we shall know even as we are known." Heaven will perfect the *spiritual life*. We now "groan, being burthened;" "when we would do good, evil is present with us;" and sin is with us and with all we do: we shall then be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Heaven will perfect the *social life*. Here we dwell in Mesech, and have our tents in Kedar: there we shall join the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven: the spirits of just men made perfect, an innumerable company of angels, Jesus the Mediator, and God the Judge of all. Heaven will perfect the *corporeal faculties*. What limbs, what senses, what imaginations, shall we have there! Everlasting eyes, everlasting ears, everlasting hands; our youth eternally renewed like the eagle's! What a state must heaven be, if we take but this one view of it, that it brings us into the possession of all the promises! "All the exceeding great and precious promises!" "To die is gain," says the apostle; and no wonder, if we are to gain all that God has spoken of, and if all that the Scriptures have told us is to be then realized. We talk of Gill as an expositor, and Doddridge as an expositor, and Henry as an expositor—O heaven will be the best expositor; heaven will explain it all, and lead us into all truth.

Now you will observe, also, that this inheritance is a *present possession*. They "*inherit*," not they "*shall inherit*." They inherit *now* the promises. Their bodies have returned to the dust and seen corruption, even before the days of Moses. But what did God say from the bush? "I am," says he—not "I was," not "I will be," but "I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." "Now," says our Saviour, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living;" for all live unto him. Can there be a clearer intimation of a separate state, however perplexing it may be to conceive of that state while we are here? Does not the Scripture perpetually imply or express it? How otherwise could we understand the words of our Saviour to the poor thief, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise?" This could not be the case as to his body which hung an hour longer, and was then tumbled into Golgotha, the place of skulls; but there was a spirit in him, and this was immediately glorified on its departure from the body. "Absent from the body and present with the Lord," says the apostle. Does not this intimate an immediate transition? And does not the apostle say "I long to depart and be with Christ, which is far better," to depart from hence, to depart from the body and

be with Christ, which is far better? Does not this regard immediate enjoyment? It is perfectly vain, as our enemies do, to contend, that a thousand years would have seemed to him but as a moment when he awoke from the tomb. Paul is not speaking of how the thing would be in review, but in anticipation; and knowing all, I would ask, could Paul reasonably be expected to prefer a state of nothingness to a continuance in a condition in which he could serve his Lord and Saviour, and enjoy him too, as he did, amidst all his trials, "rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory!"

Christians, some of you here have had many of your pious friends and relatives removed from you: but remember, they who have fallen asleep in Jesus do not perish until the resurrection: no; they now inherit the promises: no; delivered from the burden of the flesh they are now enjoying the felicity of heaven. They have done with sorrows, and, what is best, they have done with sin: they are freed from all their infirmities and all their distractions: they have not known what a wandering thought, or an impatient feeling, or an emotion of earthly mindedness is since they entered that blessed world of light and life, of peace and joy; they are there for ever with the Lord, and waiting to receive you into everlasting communion.

Having ascertained our models, and having seen their present condition, let us now consider, thirdly, THEIR PREVIOUS DISPOSITIONS. Let us, then, observe, first, *their dependence and order*. "*Faith and patience*." Not patience and faith: patience does not precede faith, but follows it: so does every thing. *Faith* is not the superstructure, but the foundation: "Building up yourselves," says Jude, "in your most holy faith." Faith is the initiatory of every thing in real godliness. Other things are the stream; this is the spring: other things are the produce; this is the root. And yet some weak and foolish people are afraid of our saying too much about faith, not considering that this is all and in all, and that as this prospers every thing will flourish.

And, secondly, *the nature of their service*. One word here will explain this fully; it is the word "through"—"through faith and patience," says the apostle, "they *inherit* the promises." This shews us at once their present use and their future cessation. Neither of these graces will be found in the future world. Where is the need of faith, when we *see* and *know*; and where is the need of patience when we have *nothing to endure*: where is the need of armour when the warfare is accomplished, and the enemies whom we now see shall be no more for ever?

But both of these are admirably adapted to our present state, and are of unspeakable use and advantage in our passing through this world. What could you do without either of them? What could you do without *faith*? Take the most simple principle in religion: we should suppose, that if there was any discovery reason could make, unaided by revelation, it would be the creation of the world; for every thing that is made must have a Maker: yet it is well known that the heathen philosophers commonly believed in the eternity of the world, or that it was produced by a casual concourse of atoms. And the apostle expressly tells us, that "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." What wonder, therefore, that as to other things these should depend upon faith! As the apostle says, "Eye hath not

seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath revealed;"—revealed them unto us by his Spirit. Says the apostle to these Hebrews, "Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." "We are saved through faith:" there is no justification without faith; there is no sanctification without faith. Do we live? "We live by faith." Do we walk? "We walk by faith." Do we stand? "By faith we stand." Do we overcome? "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." We read of "the word of faith;" "the operation of faith;" "the fight of faith;" "the household of faith;" and so of the rest: as if every thing was of faith; as if every thing in religion was only a modification of faith. No wonder, therefore, if, as you heard on Friday morning, the Christian cries out, with tears, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief:" no wonder the Apostle prayed, "Lord, increase our faith."

What could you do without *patience*; and how necessary is it, therefore, that you should pray that patience may have its perfect work; that you may be perfect *entirely*, lacking nothing. Patience has two offices to perform; the one regards waiting for good, and the other, the bearing of evil. It has been much disputed which of these two be the greater trial or of the more difficult exercise. We apprehend this can never be perfectly decided; there must be some reference to a man's constitution, and to his circumstances in life. Surely some are by their natural complexion, as well as by their mode of life, more prepared for the one than for the other: but both of them will be constantly required while we are here. In some cases they both are required, at the same time particularly. The apostle John, therefore, in spirit, referring to a great persecution of the people of God, exclaims, "Here is the faith and patience of the saints." So were they succoured, so were they exercised. But though there are some occasions in which the exercise of both are particularly required, I need not tell you, Christians, that both of them are always necessary, daily, and hourly, and it is only through these, through faith and patience, that you can ever inherit the promises.

Having ascertained our models, and having seen their present condition, and also their previous dispositions, let us, in the fourth place, observe *OUR DUTY IN REFERENCE TO THEM*; which is, to be followers of them: "Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

The injunction implies three things: First, *that there is nothing unattainable and impracticable in the examples of those who have gone before us*. We may, we can, follow them. They were exercised by the very same temptations, and they had the very same passions with us. They were not always watchful; they were when they exercised their faith and patience. They were "by nature children of wrath, even as others." "In them, that is, in their flesh, dwelt no good thing." What they were they were by grace; what they did they did by grace; and that grace is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. There is no reason, therefore, why we should ever despond. "Yea," says the Apostle, in reference to his own case, "I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, as a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

Secondly, that *we should acquaint ourselves with them*. Without this you cannot follow them; you cannot follow or pursue what you are ignorant of. Imitation is something voluntary, something intentional, something that requires observation, frequent observation, and to have the thing much before the eye of the mind, in order to have the mind impressed. You should, therefore, search the Scriptures, in order to see what God has there recorded of them, what of their principles, what of their actions, what of their sufferings. You should behold them in the various relationships and conditions of life; you should see how they behaved in prosperity, and in adversity, in life and in death. These examples are recorded for this very purpose.

And the third thing is, that *you should not be satisfied with any thing short of resemblance and conformity*. You are not to be contented with a vain curiosity, or an idle admiration of these characters—you are to imitate and follow. With these striking examples before you, you are not to “behold, and wonder, and perish.” With these men labouring in the vineyard you are not to stand all the day idle, or lounging, or to lean upon a gate talking idly with others. You are to *work too*. If they denied themselves, you must deny yourself: if they mortified the deeds of the body, you must mortify the deeds of the body; if they had their conversation in heaven, you must have yours there also; if they walked by faith and not by sight, so must you walk. You are to be “followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

In this conformity allow me just to mention two things which are worthy of your regard. First, *you should distinguish what was peculiar in their situation to themselves, and what was common and general*. The best way of teaching is always by instances and examples. You remember Ahaz sent a captain with five soldiers to take Elijah. He was sitting on the brow of a hill, and he commanded fire to come down and consume them. This was a supernatural impulse; this is proved by the event: he could not command the clouds; the elements of God would not have come down on the instant to work a miracle in vain, or merely to humour his pettishness and his revenge. Well, you remember when the Saviour was going up to a village of the Samaritans the Samaritans would not receive him, and the disciples said, “Lord, shall we command fire from heaven to consume them, as Elias did?” “Why,” says he, “you are not under the same dispensation, you are not called to execute the judgments of God. Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. If you think these feelings are suggestions from above, you are mistaken; it is your own unhallowed fire; for the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”

Then, again, *with regard to such things, in which they were exemplars, you should attend to these things chiefly as regards yourselves*. There is a disposition in persons the very reverse of this. They love to hear of the duties of others, not of their own. Subjects love to hear of the duties of sovereigns, and sovereigns love to hear of the duties of their subjects; people love to hear of the duties of ministers, and ministers love to hear of the duties of their people towards them; wives love to hear of the duties of husbands, and husbands love dearly to hear of the duties of wives. But would it not be better for us all to seek after *our own* particular duties, whatever be our rank, whatever our station, whatever our condition in life, going to the Book, or going to the preaching, with the disposition of David, when he said, “I will hear

what God the Lord will speak to me," or with the question of Saul of Tarsus, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?"

Are you to bury a beloved child? Why, then, think with Abraham, when he received that command, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there;" and think of his rising early in the morning the next day, in order to accomplish it. If you have been injured by others, think of Joseph, who, though he was envied and hated by his brethren, and sold as a slave, and intentionally murdered, yet not only forgave them, but fell upon their necks and kissed them, and laboured to prevent an excess of remorse, telling them that God had sent him before them to preserve them. And so of other instances.

Having ascertained our models, and having seen their present condition, and their previous disposition, and observed our duty with regard to them, let us finally remark, WHAT IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO DISCHARGE IT; namely, that you fling away sloth. "Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." A philosopher was asked, "What is the sin most universal to all mankind?" and his answer was, and we are persuaded that he answered truly and justly, "Idleness and sloth." See a child: with what difficulty can you obtain any thing like continued serious attention to subjects you are attempting to teach it. It is like your endeavouring to tie it with a ball of mercury to the legs of a table. Look at man: in what state should we find the community now, of how many thousand things should we remain ignorant, if individuals were not urged by the most powerful considerations of want or advantage. But mental sloth is much greater than bodily sloth, and spiritual sloth is much greater than even mental. It seems very astonishing as well as unnatural; allowing that a man is on the bed of sloth, we should suppose that it would be impossible for him to remain there when he opens his eyes and looks about him in the light of revelation. Can he see such honours as these, and not feel something like ambition? Can he see such riches, and not feel something like avarice? Can he learn that the Judge standeth at the door and not be afraid? Can he see such a heaven and not agonize in order to enter it? Can he see hell moving to meet him at his feet (for however he may procrastinate, damnation slumbereth not); can he see this and not tremble, and flee from the wrath to come?

I would not apologize for any thing wrong in itself. Young converts have sometimes been much censured for some improprieties. They are sometimes severely condemned, as if they were too exclusively attentive and earnest in regard to the things that belong to their everlasting peace, and so suffer themselves to be drawn away a little too much from other concerns, which it is their duty to regard. I would only observe here, that the people of the world never complain of a man for not being righteous enough, but only for being righteous overmuch. The truth is, that in matters of religion a deficiency in such a case would be as blameable as excess, if excess indeed can be. Yet you never find this to be the case. If a man prays rather unseasonably he is lampooned; not the man who lives without God in the world. I remember the case of a farmer in the West of England many years ago; I looked upon the man as acting very imprudently, for for every thing, as Solomon says, there is a time; but this man, in his fervency and zeal, used sometimes to call together from the field in the day time,



his hay-makers, and reapers, and labourers, in order to engage with him in a religious exercise. I observed that this poor man became the scorn and contempt, not only of the parish, but also of the parson of the parish; but they never took any notice of the drunken, swearing, sabbath-breaking farmers, who never prayed at all with their families or their servants. This, by the way, is another proof that the carnal mind is enmity against God. But, to return: really when we consider the infinite importance of eternal things, and how suddenly and how surprisingly sometimes they break in upon the minds of people at first, and of minds, too, frequently, not well informed upon any subject, what wonder is it if at times they should produce a little impropriety? Yea, the wonder is, that with such consequences depending, we can fight so faintly as we do; that with such a prize exhibited before us, we run so sluggishly as we do the race that is set before us. How diligent are men in the ordinary transactions of life; how diligent are they in these things: they rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, and compass sea and land, in order to advance temporal concerns, which after all have very little connexion with their happiness. A hint is sufficient there. You don't want the preacher in your shops, in the market, or on the exchange: no, but where spiritual things are concerned, one day out of seven must be applied to this purpose, to stir you up to be followers of Christ. There must be sanctuaries all over the country; there must be preachers without, there must be conscience fixed within. There must be the various dispensations of providence; we must be goaded and wooed; we must be blessed and chastised. Sometimes the desire of our eyes is taken away by a stroke; sometimes our wife, or child, or friend is taken away by a stroke; sometimes we are reduced to poverty by an untoward event; sometimes our bodily health is taken away, and we are left to waste away by lingering disease: and all this is in order to induce us to think of a better, even a heavenly inheritance. And yet, alas, all this is too little; all this is in vain! But was it by the indulgence of sloth that these characters, who through faith and patience now inherit the promises, rose to their eminence and distinction, and entered the kingdom? Do you imagine that all that is necessary is, to step into the boat, and lie down, and go to sleep, and leave it to the current? This is enough if you are to sail with the stream, and you have no objection to the gulf of perdition below: but if you are to sail against the stream, there must be oars, and therefore exertion; you will find all these necessary, or you will never reach the fountain of life. I would ask, Is it possible that a slothful man can ever fight the good fight of faith, or run the race that is set before him, or take the kingdom of heaven by violence; or strive to enter in at the strait gate? Yet all these are images employed by the Spirit of God to describe the nature of the heavenly life. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." "I went by," says Solomon, "the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction." May you do the same.

But it is necessary to come to a conclusion. What does our subject say to the greater part of this congregation? Either we are not Christians or this

text is not true. A great man said years ago, when he read a passage of Scripture, not more characteristic of the Christian's obligation than our text this morning, "What a lamentable thing it is to think what a difference there is between our religion in the principle and the practice, in the profession and in the exemplification in the Bible, in Christ, and in our tempers and lives!" These things ought not so to be. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Watch against the very beginning of sloth, it is a downy bed, and encroaches imperceptibly. Cultivate a holy activity of mind; look hard at your station and your resources, and see what you have by which you may be enabled to glorify your Saviour and serve your generation according to your circumstances, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," says Solomon, "do it with all thy might, for there is no work nor device in the grave whither thou goest." Your time flies and you ought not to creep; your time flies, and you ought not to sleep; to sleep even in the garden with Jesus Christ suffering hard by—suffering in his members, and in his cause! What, cannot you watch with him one hour! O, be followers of him who said, "I must work the work of him that sent me whilst it is day; the night cometh wherein no man can work."

We have been urging you to be followers of the good; but this does not satisfy; we wish you to be examples yourselves, that others may follow you. We wish you so to live that others may safely and advantageously follow you when you die, and before you die too. We wish that you who are heads of houses would so live and so behave yourselves, as to feel authorised to say to those who are under your care, to your children and your household, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." I would have each of you in the evening ask, "What have I done to-day that is worthy of imitation? What have my children seen in me, what have my servants, what have my friends, what have my neighbours, seen in me worthy to be followed?" O carry the efficacy of the sermons you hear along with you; diffuse it among those who refuse to hear at present, and win them without words. Endeavour by your holiness, like the moral law, to convince men of sin; and, like the Gospel, to lead them to the consolations of Israel. O "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Amen.

## THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

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REV. J. DRESSER,

QUEEN STREET CHAPEL, DARLINGTON, 1836.

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“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”—NUMBERS, XXII. 18.

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BALAAH, the history of whose inconsistencies stands connected with the words of our text, was a soothsayer, resident in Mesopotamia, celebrated for his skill in the arts of sorcery and enchantment. He was sent for by Balak, the king of Moab, who had heard of his fame, to come and curse the Israelites who had come out of Egypt, and who had discomfited, routed, and slain, the armies of the surrounding nations. It is clear from the sacred text, that though Balaam was full of subtlety and avarice; though he was defiled with crime and wrought wickedness in the sight of God; yet, he answered Balak with words becoming a true prophet of the Most High, saying, “How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed, and how shall I defy whom God hath not defied? Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel:” and while he revolved upon the irrevocable purposes of Jehovah, and upon the whole extent of Israel’s destiny, as made known to him by the God of heaven; and while pondering on the triumphant issue of a life devoted to the service of God, in the fulness of his contemplations he exclaimed, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”

I presume that this language is not peculiar to the man who uttered it; that this desire is not confined to the breast in which it originally dwelt; but, could I penetrate the heart of every individual in this congregation: could I explore the interior of every human soul, and ascertain the sentiments living there; I could answer for you who are Christians, and for you who are not, as with a simultaneous voice, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”

Vast and complicated are all our trials; precarious and uncertain are all the enjoyments of human life: “Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble: he cometh forth and is cut down like a flower: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.” No sooner are we ushered forth from the retired recesses of infancy, than we press onwards to seek a grave in the silent earth. And whether we are conscious or unconscious, the moments of life are rapidly passing away, and the solemn period will soon arrive when the world and all that it contains, will recede from our dying sight, and when the language of our text will be the language of every man, whether infidel or Christian; for in the hour of nature’s last conflict, all desire to die the death of the righteous, and their last end to be like his.

May He who shall one day make a final invasion upon the elements of mortality, and demonstrate before an assembled universe that he is the resurrection and the life, vouchsafe his presence on this occasion, and inspire in every heart a well-grounded hope of immortality and eternal life.

In treating this serious and important subject, two things shall engage our attention: first, a scriptural representation of death; secondly, some of the reasons why the death of a righteous man becomes an object of desire to a wicked man.

First, A SCRIPTURAL REPRESENTATION OF DEATH. Death, my brethren, is a subject in which we all must sooner or later be concerned, it behoves us, therefore, especially to take heed to the things that we hear, and to consider not merely the conflict which shall take place between our mortal bodies and death, but its bearing upon our future unalterable destinies in the world to come: for we must all die, we must all, of dire necessity, pass the awful boundary line that separates the present world from the world of spirits, and either rise up to the throne of God, or sink down into the deeps of hell. Therefore, take heed how ye hear, and "prepare to meet your God."

Though death, simply considered in itself, is nothing more than a cessation of life; yet, as it hath pleased the Almighty, by the infallible pen of inspiration, to personify it, and represent it by different names and designations, I shall feel myself justified in noticing a few of the figures and designations given in the inspired records.

In the first place, death is emphatically styled in the sacred writings an *enemy* to man (1 Cor. xv. 26; Job, xviii. 14). This truth has been sufficiently confirmed by the countless millions of our fellow-creatures, whose hearts have failed, and whose souls have departed beneath his withering touch. Let us look at a few of the characteristics of this enemy: the place whence he originally sprung, and the appalling monster (sin) that breathed into him the power, and nerved his arm to prostrate at pleasure the inhabitants of the earth, all strongly indicate that he is an enemy of cruel and unsparing revenge. He was entirely unknown and unconceived, when the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy at the appearance of the material universe. All was peace and harmony, and life and immortality, but man impeached the veracity of his Maker, and by a transgression of horrible enormity, dishonoured every attribute of the everlasting God. Then a sigh was seen, and then a voice was heard, such as the garden of Paradise never witnessed before: Death issued from the pandemonium of spirits accursed, bearing upon his front the significant language of the Divine Being, "Thou shalt surely die;" while his voice through every element of nature resounded, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." He broke in upon the constancy and harmony of nature, and by one fell stroke demonstrated every thing beneath the sun perishable and uncertain; his visitation directed the pen of inspiration, when it recorded, "Man dieth and wasteth away; man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" In every step of his progress through the world he has designated himself by his achievements, the unappeasable enemy of man. There is a desire in man to evade this enemy, and to screen himself from the ruthlessness of this fell destroyer, but in vain; he pursues him with a restless perseverance, peculiar to himself, through every lane of life, and with a hard-heartedness,

unparalleled in the history of the world, regardless of all human distinctions, and all the sympathy and weeping of friends, he intrudes himself upon the contestation, and spreads his poison there until the body weary, worn out, and skeletonized, breathes out the soul upon an untried state of existence, either of bliss or of woe. So impartial are the strokes of this adversary, that no gift can bribe him, no power resist him, no eloquence dissuade him from his purpose, for to accomplish all his pleasure he is invested with attributes of invincible power and sleepless vigilance. He is never asleep at his post, never unconcerned about his work; but pursues his prey night and day, intent upon destruction. From the melancholy moment that he sprang into existence, devastation and misery have followed in his train: he has never halted in his march; he has never been put to flight; he has never been routed from the field; he has never been taken captive in the day of battle; but, like the great leviathan of the deep, he remains impenetrable to external violence, and indestructible by the ravages of time; "upon the earth there has not been his like, who esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood." The mightiest monarchs, the greatest heroes, and the most courageous saints, have yielded up their weapons to the "king of fear," and acknowledged the insufficiency of their puny efforts, in setting boundaries to the measureless extent of his reign. Absalom was caught by this pursuer in a thicket of the forest. Pharaoh met him in the Red Sea; and notwithstanding his military prowess, he "sunk like lead in the mighty waters." David and Jonathan, who were swift as eagles, and strong as lions, and who were emphatically one in spirit, yet how were they severed from each other, how were they entangled in the captivity of death. Samson, who with the jaw-bone of an ass "slew a thousand men," cowered beneath his uplifted spear and did obeisance to the "king of terrors;" and while I am speaking, and while you are hearing, he is slaying his thousands; yes, and he is invisibly present with us on this occasion, waiting for the signal to dislodge our souls, while all nature seems combined to thunder out the important declaration of an inspired prophet, "Prepare to meet thy God."

Again, death is an enemy that frequently comes upon his victim suddenly and unperceived. O! my hearers, think of this: he is an enemy whom you cannot recognize by your natural vision; he steals into the chambers of rest, and while deep sleep hath fallen upon man, he unceremoniously and unflinchingly declares, "Thou shalt die, and not live." O! my brethren, should this enemy startle us in our midnight slumbers, should he come upon us as a thief in the night, without announcing the signal of his approach: "May we die the death of the righteous, and let our last end be like his."

I observe, in the second place, that death is represented in the sacred writings under the figure of a *departure*: Luke, ii. 29; Phil. i. 23; 2 Tim. iv. 6. And I know of no figure throughout the whole of the inspired volume, more important and significant than that of a departure; it teaches us the near relation in which we stand to another world, and the certainty that there is a living consciousness in man that shall survive the dissolution of the body, and remain uninjured and unimpaired when the present scene of things is reduced to its numble original. The soul, whose nature is spiritual and immaterial, can never die: it is destined for immortality, and must unchangeably and for ever enjoy the inconceivable happiness of heaven, or endure the unsufferable torments of

hell. Death is not, as some would have us to believe, an extinction of consciousness, but a departure from a state of trial and probation, to a state fixed and unalterable—from a world of alternate pleasure and pain, to a world of perpetually consummate happiness, or perpetually consummate misery—from a world of encumbered spirits, to a world where pure ethereal beings dwell. This is an idea which men of all ages and of all nations have entertained of death. Go into yonder church-yard, and read the inscriptions upon the tombstones of those who have gone the way of all flesh, and what is the general and impressive tale written there? “Departed this life:” an acknowledgment worthy the dignity of candidates for immortality, and worthy of the serious consideration of the sceptic and the infidel; for they labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought and in vain, when they essay to erase from the mind of man the impression of an hereafter.

“ There is a heaven above to gain,  
A hell beneath to shun;  
Our lot will be one of the train,  
When life's short journey's done.”

We must of necessity die, and explore regions which, while we remain in the flesh, baffle and confound our utmost conceptions. We must depart, we must change our place as well as our condition in life; and, the moment the weary wheels of life stand still, we are no longer residents of this world, but of some other place. O, how inconceivably important is the moment of departure; the passing of the soul into an untried region of disembodied spirits! I greatly fear that we often speak of departing into a world unknown thoughtlessly, and with too little concern on our souls. It is the most critical and momentous epoch in the history of man; it is the breaking through the circle in which we move; it is the leaving off of the companionship of men for the companionship of higher and more exalted beings; or for the companionship of the most degraded rebels in the universe of God. It is passing into a world “from whose bourn no traveller returns” to tell what is doing there. They who have gone thither cannot draw aside the veil, and disclose unto us the untold wonders of eternity; they cannot reveal the mysteries enclosed within the circles of an unending life. But though the intelligences above, and the intelligences beneath, are silent in point of information on this awful subject, the infallible record of inspiration meets our emergency, and from it we learn, that the wicked depart into the presence of a multitude whose chorus murmurs through the darkness of everlasting duration, saying, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” The same record informs us, that the righteous depart amid the acclamations of angels, and the thundering hosannas of the heavenly host, into a world where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. These (the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal. Suffer me to ask you, my hearers, what kind of a departure you are anticipating; are you prepared for heaven, or are you prepared for hell? Does not the vivid recollection of future destinies awaken in your hearts an acknowledgment that it is high time to awaken out of sleep? What will be your views, and your feelings, and your language, when you stand upon the frontiers of another world when your heart and your flesh are failing; when all the functions of life are ceasing to play; and when all around you is sterile and dark? It will be the

language of our text, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

I observe, in the third place, that death is represented in the sacred writings as *the universal allotment of the human race* (1 Cor. xv. 22; Heb. ix. 27). It is the unalterable decree of the great Arbitrer of life, of time, and of eternity, that man shall go the way whence he shall not return. In what region will you search for a man that liveth, and shall not see death? Where is the infidel to be found that can nullify the emphatic language of an illustrious prophet who once said, "All do fade as a leaf." The decree has gone forth, and the united energies of earth and hell cannot annul it, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." This is the fixed law of heaven, an enactment made by Him who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; and from whose righteous tribunal there is no appeal; it is like the law of the Medes and the Persians, it altereth not. Whatever may have been the riches or the strength of nations or of individuals, they have all submitted to this law; they have all either willingly or unwillingly resigned their fleeting breath, and departed hence to be no more seen. Where are the inhabitants of the antediluvian age, who by reason of their strength and the healthful temperature of the atmosphere, flourished for centuries without feeling their natural force abated? They are gone, and the place of their habitation is unknown; they are gone without leaving either wreck or trace behind (save the inspired records). And where are all the generations that have succeeded them up to the present time? They also have been removed into the dreary regions of the dead, where all things are forgot. "Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" What, my brethren, has been the history of all ages, but a history of the exploits and desolations of death? In every part of the habitable globe we may learn by transpiring events, that death is the allotment of man; death reigns over every region of the world: a century depopulates the globe, and, with a few rare exceptions, plunders every habitation of man. One generation passeth away, and another cometh: and this ingress and egress has been the characteristic of all generations. All earthly travellers meet in the house appointed for all living, and "dust to dust" concludes the noblest song.

If such then has been the sad catastrophe of our forefathers, and of some whom we once knew in the flesh, what is the actual state of the present generation; of us, who are now assembled together hearing the words of eternal life? We are all tending to dissolution; the pallid hue and the cold sweat which we may have sometimes witnessed upon the countenances of our fellow-creatures when struggling in the agonies of death, will soon be seen by our survivors upon us; for in whatever business we may be engaged, whether at home or abroad, asleep or awake, we are travelling to the grave. Great God! how awful the reflection—We are dying creatures; one moment, and we may disappear; before the shades of night prevail we may be exploring the wonders of eternity. And are we unconcerned? Can we trifle with our souls, when the very breath we inhale is big with death? Brethren, it is of infinite moment to ascertain upon what foundation you are building for eternity. What are your hopes, and what are your fears? It is my desire, and I trust it is yours also, to know that you are accepted of God through Jesus Christ, and ripening for the inheritance of the saints in light; that you may be able, at any moment, under divine influence, to say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in

peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation ;" or in the language of our text, " Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

As the figures which we have employed, at this time, to represent death are the principal, and most striking, and into which all the rest may be resolved, we proceed, in the second place, to assign SOME REASONS WHY THE DEATH OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN BECOMES AN OBJECT OF DESIRE TO A WICKED MAN.

The term "righteous," as it occurs in the text, can only have one acceptation, and must, therefore, necessarily refer to principle—righteousness that enters into the inner man, and influences the dispositions, affections, and motives of the human mind: it includes inward and outward righteousness, in all their ramifications; a sense of acceptance with God, a knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, a confirmed title to unfading glory, and everlasting life. The import, therefore, of the term "righteous," as it occurs in this passage, is determined without controversy by the construction of the passage itself, and the connexion in which it stands; and the term under the present dispensation, unquestionably means true religion, the kingdom of God within us, by which we have an assurance that though we walk through the valley and shadow of death, we need fear no evil, for God is with us, to strengthen us, deliver us, and save us. O! that I could look around upon this assembly, and say for every individual who now hears me, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die, is gain."

The first thing that appears enviable in the death of a righteous man, is *the calmness and tranquillity of his departure.*

What is there amid things visible so venerable in contemplation, as a righteous man bending beneath the weight of years, and finishing his course in the faith of the Gospel? Men who are the least susceptible of Christian feeling involuntarily pronounce blessings on his memory. How enviable is the state of his soul! He is comforted and sustained by the precious promises of the everlasting Gospel; he has been washed from the guilt and pollution of sin; he has been redeemed by the blood of the everlasting covenant; and by grace through faith he has kept himself unspotted from the world: and now he can look forward with holy confidence, and without dismay, to the swellings of Jordan, and bid defiance to the utmost rage of the monster death. He reviews the past mercies of God to his soul; he marks the period when by faith he received the salvation of his soul; when he was united to Christ by living faith, and could say, "Abba, Father; my Lord and my God." He reflects upon every step of his earthly pilgrimage; upon the period when the tabernacles of the Lord were amiable; when he enjoyed all the privileges of the house of God, when the Christian Sabbath was a day of rest to his soul. He looks through a life of devotedness to the service of God, and finds that he has been habituating himself to that state of society to which he belongs: he has been living by faith on the Son of God, and the theme of his meditation has been, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire in comparison of thee." The subject of his most frequent prayers has been for an enlargement of heart, with an increase of all the blessings of the Gospel of peace, and their extension to his perishing fellow-men. When he came within the precincts of the sanctuary, such have been the overflowings of his gratitude, and the conscious revelation of the divine presence to his soul,



that he has, when silently adoring in his heart, exclaimed, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." These reflections, with an abiding evidence that he has an interest in the blood of Jesus, constitute the calmness and tranquillity of his soul, amid the falling of his earthly tabernacle. As he goes down to the dark and cheerless valley, he listens to a voice coming from the secret place of thunder, sweet as the music of heaven, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: as thy day is, so shall thy strength be." Thus supported he ventures down, and dips his feet in Jordan; and while friends are weeping, in inconsolable anguish around his bed, and while angels and arch-angels are witnessing his Christian heroism, he passes through death triumphant home, and seraphs greet his entrance there.

"The chamber where the good man meets his fate,  
Is privileged beyond the common walks  
Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heaven."

And if you are righteous, life is yours, and death is yours; the aspect of the last enemy is changed, and his approach is for your highest and eternal advantage. Such is the exuberance of the grace of God, that the Christian can triumph in the arms of death, and with heaven in prospect exclaim, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Such is the unruffled peace, and undisturbed tranquillity of the departing saint, that it is represented in the sacred writings as a sleep, as falling asleep, falling asleep in Jesus, passing into a state of rest, a region of calm repose, where the body is relieved from all the disasters incident to human life, and all the oppression that may have been imposed upon it in this world for ever. There,

"The languishing head is at rest,  
Its thinking and aching are o'er,  
The quiet immoveable breast  
Is heaved by affliction no more.

The heart is no longer the seat  
Of trouble and torturing pain;  
It ceases to flutter and beat,  
It never will flutter again."

Secondly, *the hope of a glorious resurrection, and the assurance of realizing a happy eternity*, are the principal reasons why the wicked envy the righteous.

The Christian goes down to the grave with widely different views and feelings to the sinner, whose guilt weighs him down, and sinks him lower than the grave: he goes down to the house appointed for all living, with his mind awake to the promise of the dear Redeemer—"I will raise him up at the last day; I will ransom him from the power of the grave." On the great day of restitution, when the summons of the Eternal shall be heard through the immensity of space, he will remember with feelings of joy the promise, "I will send mine angels to gather mine elect from the four winds of heaven." Away then with our fears, and our shrinking back from the cold hand of death. Our bodies, it is true, may be followed by our weeping friends to the grave, and over our remains they may hear the doleful sound, "Dust to dust, and ashes to ashes:" but they shall not remain in the grave for ever; they shall burst the prison-house, and, by the omnipotent energy of Jesus Christ, disentangle themselves

from the shackles of the grave ; they shall hear the summons, and with joy indescribable go forth to meet Him, out of whose fulness they have received, and grace for grace ; and by whose omnific power our vile bodies shall be changed like unto Christ's glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

Who can describe the enjoyment of the man of God, when, amid the ruins of a dissolving world, he exclaims, " This is my God ; I have waited for him : I will rejoice and be glad in his salvation. There you see the resurrection of the righteous in all its infinite results, and in all the plenitude of its consummation ! There you see the perfection of the plan, and the winding up of the scheme of human redemption ! There you see God " glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." Glance for a moment into *the place* where the righteous are destined to live for ever, and tell if it is not an enviable place, a glorious situation ! Does not a desire vibrate in your souls to dwell with them through all the ages of eternity ? Their destination is heaven, mount Zion, the city of the great King. It is represented as a paradise, an inheritance, a throne, a city, a crown, a kingdom. But, then, all these things by which it is represented are perishable and fading, and, therefore, cannot perfectly represent it. The thrones, and kingdoms, and crowns, which are in reversion for the righteous, incorruptible, unfading, and everlasting. The city which they are everlastingly to inhabit hath foundations, whose builder and maker is the living God. O, the grandeur of the palace, and the dominions of our God and of his Christ ! O, our souls would long to go, to see the " King in his beauty, and the land that is now afar off !"

There, again, *the enjoyments* of the righteous will be as perfect as the place. God Almighty will be continually revealing and unveiling the glories of his face, and pouring out new enjoyments upon the countless multitude of heaven ; there reposing under a cloudless sky in regions of unsullied light, they shall see the divine glory breaking forth from the throne of God and the Lamb, to fertilize the plains of heaven, and replenish the ranks of the redeemed with an eternity of bliss ; for there is fulness of joy, and at God's right hand there are pleasures for evermore. Is not the society of the righteous in heaven an enviable society—a society consisting of all the ancient worthies and martyrs that have reached the heavenly shores before us, down to Adam's last saved son, who shall be presented without fault before the presence of the Divine glory, with exceeding joy ? O ! what delight will it afford us, to spend a blissful eternity with those whom we once loved upon earth, and with whom we took sweet counsel ! There we shall recount the toils of combat, and the labours of the way : there we shall join our voices with the hallelujahs of the blessed, and lose ourselves amidst the splendours of the beatific vision. See the ransomed of the Lord returning to Zion : with what shouts of ecstasy do they ascend the base of the divine throne ! And while they are looking up and gazing upon the unclouded splendour of the King of heaven, with notes almost divine they sing, " Unto Him that hath loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever !" If such be the calmness and tranquillity of a Christian's transition from this world to another, and if such be the blessedness of the righteous in life, in death, and to all eternity, " may we die the death of the righteous, and let our last end be like his."

Finally, I address you all, and ask you, as in the immediate presence of God

Are *you* prepared to die the death of the righteous? Brethren, this is a vastly important question, it is an all-absorbing point; for, upon it is suspended your final sentence. You have heard, in the course of the remarks that I have made, that you are liable to be called away in a moment, and if you are unprepared, you will be eternally shut out of the mansions of the blessed. O, that ye were wise, that ye understood this, that ye would consider your latter end! If you die in your sins, your rejection of the Saviour, and contempt of the blood of the cross, will heighten your misery, and exile you to the hottest hell. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than it will be for you, if you neglect the salvation of the Gospel. I earnestly entreat of you, by all that is solemn in death, and by all that is enviable in the hopes and prospects of the righteous, to be reconciled to God. If, however, the feeble efforts of him who now addresses you, have failed in making a deep and lasting impression upon your minds, then I turn to Him whose power and prerogative it is to save the soul; and I conjure you, in his name, and by his authority, whose smile is heaven, and whose frown is hell, to "prepare to meet your God." Call upon the blood of sprinkling, that your names may be written in heaven, and that the recording angel may have to announce in the climes of bliss your transformation from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. Let there be joy in heaven over your repenting and turning to God: and then by continuance in well-doing, you shall die the death of the righteous, and your last end shall be like his. Amen.

## THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN.

“Now, brethren, I have thus discoursed to you on the knowledge of sin, just as though our whole acquaintance with the Gospel, so far at least as our present condition is concerned, were resolvable into this knowledge of sin; and, in real truth, although a knowledge of the Gospel comprehends a vast variety of departments, yet a knowledge of sin is, as it were, the passport which admits us into the secrets of the kingdom. Until there be a knowledge of the disease, it is not possible there should be any knowledge of the remedy; and the scheme of salvation adapts itself with such nice and accurate precision to the peculiar circumstances of fallen beings, that unless there be a due appreciation of these circumstances, there is much in the scheme which must appear useless, and much which will be accounted strange and inexplicable. What can be seen of the atonement until we see sin as deserving an infinite penalty? What can be seen of imputed righteousness until we see ourselves so depraved by the fall, that we can present to God no obedience of our own? What can be seen of the sanctifying influences of faith, influences which supply unto their possessors all the place of an extended code of moral enactments, until we see the utter vileness of the estate from which Christ rescues, and the magnitude of the obligation which binds us to him with all the bonds of a most loving devotion?

I am persuaded, that the more you search into the causes of that repugnance which is manifested by carnal men towards the humbling but glorious doctrines of the Gospel, the more will you find that an erroneous estimate of the heinousness of sin is at the root of all this virulent opposition. What are all the denials of free grace, of God's electing to himself a believing remnant—of the sufficiency of faith—of man's need of supernatural assistance—what, I say, are the denials of these doctrines, doctrines which may be called the very life's-blood of Christianity, save just so many natural and necessary results of an ignorance of the poisonous and pestilential character of sin? In proportion as man thinks lightly of sin, he thinks well of himself; and in proportion as he thinks well of himself, he presumes on his own capacities; and so long as there is a conceit of human ability, there will be a correspondent contempt of Divine interference. Hence it were certainly lawful to affirm, that the knowledge of sin is the very eye-glass in the spiritual telescope—take it away, and the whole field of view becomes dim, and misty, and confused—insert it, and all the magnificent forms of mercy, and victory, and deliverance, walk brilliantly before us in their native stature, and man looks upon the Gospel just as an astronomer on the milky way in the firmament, so that where he had discerned nothing but a general brightness, he finds separate stars, each illustrious in its splendours. And all I ask of you is, whether, since it is impossible that the Gospel be seen unless the evil of sin is known, and this evil of sin cannot be known, as I have explained to you, except by the regenerate, is it not a most just assertion, an assertion that may be vindicated to its literal and grammatical acceptation, that ‘Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God?’”

REV. H. MELVILL, A.M.

THE LAST ASSIZE.

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REV. H. MELVILL, A.M.

ST. SEPULCHRE'S CHURCH, SNOW HILL, APRIL 17, 1836 •.

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“ And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”—REV. xx. 12.

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THESE words occur in the account of a sublime vision vouchsafed to the evangelist, John, and which represented to him the final consummation of all things. Though the book of Revelation contains much that is mysterious, and even inexplicable, passages such as this, which I have just read to you, are as instructive as magnificent. It is evident that the delineation is that of transactions in which we must all bear a part in the last general assize. A great white throne rose before the view of the exile in Patmos: the sea and the land gave up the myriads of whom they had been the sepulchre: on the throne sat a Being so terrible in his grandeur, that the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. We have abundant demonstration, from other portions of Scripture, that the appointed Judge of human kind is the Mediator, Christ—He who died “ the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God.” Hence, though it is said in our text, “ I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God,” we conclude that it was before the *Redeemer* that the mighty multitude of those whom the grave had surrendered were arraigned, the title of absolute divinity being justly assigned to Him who is evidently the Son of man, seeing that the two natures coalesced indissolubly in his person.

We make this remark at the outset of our discourse, because much that we wish to advance will turn on the fact that the Judge and the Mediator are one and the same. According to St. John in our text, the whole human race stood before God; but, according to St. Paul, we know that God “ hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by *that man* whom he hath ordained.” We have no difficulty in reconciling these statements, because we know that he was both God and man; we see that the same Being is intended in both cases, even he who died and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.” Our text then proceeds to give some account of the principles, upon which judgment will be conducted, shewing that an accurate register has been kept of human actions, and that men will be judged according to their works, and therefore judged in righteousness. The truths thus announced in the passage are so solemn and august, that they claim undivided attention, and seem to summon away from every other consideration. The truths that a day must come when the whole world shall be judged—that

• On behalf of the Ladies' Charity School, King-street, Snow-hill.

the Being who is to preside at this vast assize, is none other than Jesus who was buffeted and crucified—and that the business of trial shall be carried on by the laws of rigid equity—we say of these truths, that their bare announcement should fix every man's attention, and bend him to the attitude of earnest and awe-stricken inquiry.

We know not whether the principles of God's moral government are insisted on with sufficient frequency and urgency from our pulpits, but we are sure that they produce not their due influence on the great mass of men. Indeed, is there one of us that will say he lives in the remembrance that he must give account of every action—that whatsoever he does, whatsoever he says, whatsoever he thinks, God notes in the book hereafter to be opened before the assembled universe, and by whose contents his fate shall be fixed for eternity? Is there one of us, who can honestly declare, that he has habitually in remembrance the solemnities of the great white throne, that he strives always to take note of the fact that he shall stand before that throne, and "receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil?" Indeed, men and brethren, we are persuaded that all of us must own ourselves guilty in this matter. Many, it may be, strive to shut out altogether the thought of future judgment, labouring, whenever it occurs, to occupy the mind by worldly business or pleasure. Others have occasional seasons, when they regard themselves as accountable creatures, and feel something of the awfulness of those scriptural representations which sketch the Son of man's descent, and the gathering of the nations, and the passing sentence upon all men; but these seasons are brief, and perhaps not of frequent occurrence, so that the general tenor of the life is unaffected by the truth, that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." Here and there, indeed, you may meet with an individual, whose thoughts are set on the account which he must one day render, and whose habitual endeavour it is to preserve an habitual sense of the coming of the Lord. But even individuals such as these will confess to you, that their endeavours are but partially successful; that they have great cause of humiliation before God, on account of their forgetfulness of the day of trial. So that there can be no class of hearers to whom the subject of discourse presented by our text is not appropriate. We feel that a signal benefit will accrue to all in this immense assembly, if God enable us to speak upon judgment to come, so that there be produced a deeper and more abiding sense of the solemnities of the last assize. We shall enter into no speculative question, but set before you the broad facts of the judgment as they are exhibited in the words before us. We shall not strive to move you by startling and high-wrought pictures of the mighty assembly that shall have risen from their graves, and the glory of the unnumbered company of angels that throng the scene of trial, and of the fiery cloud that shall give pomp to his descent. There is something so sublime in the naked announcement, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God," that it were presumption of the worst kind, to think we make it more majestic and more commanding, by adding to it any of the figures of human rhetoric. We shall only premise a few remarks on the necessity of a general judgment, in order to vindicate God's moral government, and then proceed to examine the several assertions made in our text in regard to this fact.

Now, in every age of the world men have been perplexed by what seemed

opposite evidences as to the superintending care of a wise and beneficent Being. On the one hand, there is no doubt that we live under a retributive government, and that cognizance is taken of our actions by an invisible, but ever-present Being, whose attributes render him the determined foe of vice, and the steadfast upholder of righteousness. On the other hand, there has been an irresistible demonstration, from the experience of all ages, that no accurate proportion is at present maintained between conduct and condition, but that vice has most frequently the upper hand, while righteousness is depressed and overwhelmed. If there have been decisive proof, from the witness of conscience, that we have been placed under the economy of redemption, there has been just as decisive from the observation of what passes on earth, that the reward and the punishment are not rigidly administered on this side the grave: and there has been no reconciling these apparent contradictions, except by supposing, that human existence would not terminate with death, but that in another, though yet unknown state, vice would receive its due meed of vengeance, and righteousness of reward. The only way of escaping the difficulty suggested by the text, has been an appeal to the future; for either the idea is erroneous, of our living under a moral government at all, or that moral government must have another scene of display, where its impartiality shall be vindicated, and every discrepancy removed. So that it is a truth which we may declare forced on our attention by what is passing in the world, that men shall be reckoned with in another state for their actions, and receive distributions of happiness or misery proportioned accurately to the things done on the earth. It is indeed true, that without a revelation we cannot reach the doctrine of the body's resurrection, and on this account our notions of futurity must be necessarily vague and erroneous; but the general doctrine that God will adjust, in another life, the disorders and inequalities of this, is the only vindication of his character as moral governor of the universe. And therefore, whatever difficulties surround this doctrine, they are not comparable to those by which they are beset by whom it is denied. There is no alternative, if we hold not the truth of a judgment to come, but the holding that this creation is not under a moral government: and we are sure, that no candid and thinking man can hesitate as to which side of the alternative shall obtain his support.

And thus you see how reason concurs with revelation in directing your thoughts to a state of retribution. The solemnities of the day of assize—nay, the very fact that all men shall be assembled at one time in order to undergo trial, in place of each being separately sentenced at the moment of death, these are purely matters of revelation, and cannot be ascertained but by reference to holy writ. The doctrine of *an intermediate state* is not discoverable by reason, and that on the simple principle that the doctrine of *the resurrection* is not. We have gone as far as we can go, by the light of natural theology, when we have explained the seeming inconsistencies of God's moral government on the supposition of future dispensations of punishment and reward. And our only wish, previously to our examining more at length the statements of our text, was the showing you the fairness, or rather the necessity, of such supposition. So that, when enlarging on the awful truths of the judgment, we might carry every man along with us, whatever his objection, as a system, to Christianity; causing you to feel, that not only in the magnificent vision of St. John, but in the sober pictures which reason itself draws of futurity, there is a season

such as that of our text—a throne, and a book, and the small and the great standing before their Maker.

We shall next remark, in order not to leave unnoticed any thing important, that *the season of judgment is not to arrive until the end of all things, when the dead shall be raised.* There is no reason for concluding from Scripture (quite the reverse), that the souls of men, immediately on their dismissal from the body, receive their final allotment. The representations of the Bible connect with the resurrection of the body the entrance of man on his final condition, whether of happiness or misery. And, indeed, the doctrine of an intermediate state appears to us to be only a direct consequence of the doctrine of a general judgment. Once admit that all men are to be put upon trial, and you also admit, so far as we can see, that their final portion is not entered upon ere that trial is past; for what could be more contrary to all show of justice, than the sentencing after execution? But when men would curiously inquire into *the particulars* of the intermediate state, we are not at all able to answer their questions. Indeed, our ideas of a purely spiritual subsistence are necessarily so crude and so scanty, that probably no amount of revelation would have enabled us thoroughly to understand the condition of the disembodied soul. We are so accustomed to the association of spirit and flesh, that we can scarcely imagine to ourselves the occupations and enjoyments of the soul when detached from the body: but of this we may be sure, that the soul of the righteous man is happy so soon as it leaves the body—the soul of the unrighteous, miserable; though, probably, the happiness is that of expectation rather than fruition—the misery, that of foreboding, rather than of torment. We doubt not that the justified soul is immediately assured of its acceptance with God, and consigned to the peace and repose of the blessed certainty that heaven will be its portion. We doubt as little that the soul of him who dies in his impenitence, is immediately conscious that its doom is determined, and given over to anguish and remorse because allowed no hope that lost time may be redeemed, and hell yet avoided. The condition of the one soul, we may suppose to be that of deep tranquillity—of the other, of fierce agitation: the one rests delightedly on the persuasion that the warfare is over and the crown secured—the other is tossed and driven by the fearful conviction, that the day of grace is past, and that nothing can avert an eternity of torment. So that, whatever the scene in which separate spirits await the resurrection, whatever the occupations of a future state, we entertain no doubt that the entrance on happiness or misery takes place at the instant of dissolution, though of neither the happiness or misery, may it be believed, that it shall be that which it shall finally be. The trumpet shall sound, and the body must be raised, ere the whole man will be the subject of divine retribution. It is the whole man, the compound of spirit and flesh, which has obeyed or transgressed; it must be therefore the whole man which is put upon trial, and which receives the portion whether of promise or threatening. Thus, whatever our thoughts of the intermediate state, we know that the allotments of eternity cannot be utterly dealt out unless the vision of our text shall have been first accomplished, and the dead, small and great, stand before their God.

And now we have glanced at the testimony which even natural religion gives to a state of retribution; and we have also brought forward what appears to be the amount of the information as the condition of the soul from death to the



resurrection. You are now prepared, then, for our confining ourselves to the statements of our text. And we pass at once to the contemplation of *the person of the Judge*. We wish to set before you the combined wisdom and mercy of the appointment, that He who is to decide our portion for eternity, is the very Being who died as our surety. We suppose the end of all things to have come, the dead to have heard the voice of the archangel, so that small and great are hastening to judgment. We suppose this sublime and fearful vision, to which we have already referred, now receiving its accomplishment. "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them." And who is it that sits upon this throne? Who is it by whose verdict the condition of untold myriads is to be eternally fixed, and whose single sentence is to determine whether everlasting happiness or everlasting misery shall be awarded to the members of the vast human family? It is a question of the first moment; for the thorough equity of the trial depends mainly on the character and capacity of the Being who presides. If you tell me *an angel*, the highest and the holiest, occupies the judgment-seat, you do not satisfy me that every verdict will be rigidly just. I cannot believe of any finite being, that he knows so accurately every circumstance in the conduct of every individual of our race, that he can make no mistake in settling the portion of millions upon millions. The wicked man may have hopes of eluding his penetration; and the righteous may have fears as to the extent of his power of discriminating. And, therefore, O you may array this angel-judge with majestic attributes, and assign him every known property and the highest perfections which constitute creatura-ship; but there can be no certainty throughout this vast assemblage which the graves have given up, that no crime shall escape detection, and nothing done for God be overlooked.

What then? Shall the throne be occupied by *Deity himself*? Shall men appear before their Maker, and receive their doom from the Omniscient? Beyond all question, such an arrangement is not liable to those objections, which seem to lie against the appointment of an angel as the judge. Nothing can escape the Omniscient, and therefore it is impossible that his decisions shall be other than rigidly impartial. The beings who shall crowd up from their sepulchres, if told that He who created them, whose all-seeing eye has watched their every action, so that in the deepest solitude they have been under his inspection, the very thoughts of the heart having been observed and registered, —if told, we say, that this Omniscient One from whom nothing can be hidden, and by whom nothing can be overlooked, is about to sit in scrutiny on their conduct, and to determine accordingly their everlasting state; will they not be fraught with a persuasion, that every thing will be done by the strictest laws of equity, and that there will not be a solitary particular in the enormous sum of human doings which shall be passed by unnoticed? Yes, they must necessarily be persuaded of all this; and yet there would be a kind of shrinking from the tribunal, as though it were not that to which creatures like ourselves can be summoned. We confess the amazing dignity of the Judge; we own it impossible that any one should fail to receive at his hand the most exact retribution; that a single threatening or a single promise should not be made good; that hypocrisy should be undetected, or humility unobserved. But then it is the very dignity of the Judge which confounds us; there is so un-

measured a separation between ourselves and the Being by whom we shall be tried, that we cannot go with any confidence to the tribunal of one who can have no sympathy with us. Of a different nature, a nature, too, which has nothing in common with the feebleness of our own, how is it possible that he should at all enter into our case and circumstances, and decide with a nice reference to changes and trials? O then for a judge, who can have something of a fellow feeling with the parties to be judged! We shrink away from absolute Deity. We know not how the weak and offending are to find access to One who has nothing in common with them, who has never experienced any of their trials, who has had none of their battles to fight, none of their sorrows to endure, none of their temptations to wrestle with. O how can such a judge, with all his wisdom and all his justice, be a fit judge of fallen men? The principles on which he will ground his decisions, will be those of unerring righteousness and truth: but is there any hope, that, in applying such principles to the case of creatures circumstanced as we are, he will proceed with that consideration, that measure of attention to our trials, which we might expect from one who knew experimentally what we are and what we suffer? O, then, we again say, for a judge, who can have something of a fellow-feeling with the parties to be judged!

But this seems like asking that our Judge should be man. Who but man can fully sympathize with man? And yet if an angel be not qualified to sit in judgment, how can a man be? A man may have the power of sympathy, which an angel has not; but then he is far inferior to the angels in those other properties which are required, and in those properties we were bold to pronounce that even angels are altogether deficient. So that, if we would determine who alone seems fitted to bear the office of judge of this creation, we appear to require the insupposable combination—insupposable, we mean, so long as you shut us out from the Gospel—the omniscience of the Deity, and the feelings of humanity. We cannot dispense with the omniscience of Deity; we see clearly enough that no finite intelligence can be adequate to that decision which will ensure the thorough justice of future retribution. But, then, neither can we dispense with the feelings of humanity; at least, we can have no confidence in approaching his tribunal, if we are sure that the difference in nature incapacitates him from sympathy with those whose sentence he is about to pronounce, and precludes the possibility of his so making our case his own, as to allow of his deciding with due allowance for their feebleness and temptations.

And here revelation comes in, and sets before us a Judge in whose person is centred that amazing combination which we have just pronounced as insupposable. This Man, by whom God hath ordained that “he will judge the world in righteousness,” is himself divine, the Word that was in the beginning with God, and which was God. He shall come in human form, and every eye shall see him, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and they who pierced him shall look upon him, and recognize, through all his majesty, the “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Yet He who descends is equally the ever-living Creator. The angels and archangels, by whom he is surrounded, adore him as from everlasting and to everlasting, the beginning and the end, the infinite, the self-existent. He, whose sign shall be seen in the heaven, and because of whom all the kindreds of the earth shall wail, is that Being

who "is not ashamed to call us brethren," and who "in that he suffered, being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted:" and yet he is also that inaccessible One, who cannot be tempted with evil, who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach, and whose goings forth have been from of old, the "I AM THAT I AM." In his person, then, is that marvellous union which we seek in the Judge of the whole human race. He is God, and therefore must he know every particular of character, every action, every motive, every thought, every word; so that there cannot rest suspicion on any of his verdicts: he cannot be imposed on, by the show of piety, and he cannot overlook it when real. But then, he is also *man*: he has himself been a sojourner on earth; he has borne my griefs, and wept my tears, and experienced my trials: and therefore will he put himself in the position of those who are brought to his bar; he will know exactly what they have had to contend with, and he will be able to adjust each sentence to the opportunities and capacities of the being on whom it is passed. And is he not then the Being, to occupy that great white throne, around which, in our text, St. John beheld the num-merable gathering—"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God?"

It is thus we are assured, that mercy and justice will alike have full scope in the transactions of the judgment, and that in appointing that the Mediator who died as our substitute will preside at our trial, God hath equally provided that every decision shall be impartial, and yet every man be dealt with as brother to him who must determine our fate. It is one of the most beautiful of the arrangements of redemption that the offices of Redeemer and Judge meet in the same person, and that person divine. We call it a beautiful arrangement, as securing towards us tenderness as well as equity; the sympathy of a friend as well as the disinterestedness of a righteous arbiter. Had the Judge been *only man*, the imperfection of his nature would have led us to expect much of error in his verdicts; had he been *only God*, the distance between him and ourselves would have made us fear that in determining our lots he would not have taken into account our feebleness and trials. The hypocrite would have hoped to baffle the penetration of the man; the lowly and the afflicted, conscious of frequent transgressions, of broken vows, of inconsistencies and backslidings, might have been appalled by the perfections of the God. It would have been an encouragement to wickedness, had the Judge been mere man, and therefore liable to be deceived; it would have filled humble piety with dread, had the Judge been only God, and therefore not touched with a feeling of our infirmities. But now the grave shall yield up its countless population, and no one, throughout the vast congregation, shall have a word to object against the fitness of the Being who occupies the judgment-seat. The bold transgressor, who, despite the remonstrances of conscience, lived long in rebellion, and then died in impenitence, he shall know that awful form on the throne of fire and of cloud, and he shall long to screen himself beneath the mountain and the rock, that he might escape the trial and the sentence: not because he can impeach the judicial qualities of the Arbiter before whom he is to appear, but only because the book of his own conscience has been opened, and from its statements he is to be judged; and he knows that the Being about to judge him is the very Being who endured agony for him, and shed blood for him, and offered him pardon, and besought him not to be his own

destroyer; and because, therefore, he knows that there is no plea which can be urged against his utter condemnation, no subterfuge by which he may escape. Mercy exhibited itself, and was despised; what then shall arrest justice, or procure acquittal for the guilty? The believer in Christ, who hearkened to the suggestions of God's Spirit, and brake away from the trammels of sin, he, too, shall know the Son of man, as he comes down in the magnificent sternness of celestial authority; and we say not, that it shall be altogether without dread or apprehension, that the righteous, starting from the sleep of death, shall hear the deepening roll of the archangel's summons, and behold the terrific pomp of the heavenly judicature. We dare not attempt to define the emotions of those most assured of deliverance, when standing in their resurrection bodies, on the earth, as it heaves with strong convulsions, and looking on the firmament lined with ten thousand times ten thousand angels, and beholding a throne such as was never piled for mortal sovereignty, and hearing sounds such as imagination cannot catch the echo of, the crash of disordered elements, and the tramp of myriads as they pass to judgment, and, clear and thrilling above all, the thunder of the trumpet-peal which has stirred the dead, and called to the sea, and the mountain, and the desert, that the general Easter of this creation was come: we dare not, we say, attempt to define what shall be the feelings of believers in Christ as this inconceivably tremendous scene is spread before them and around them, but we are certain that they will be assured and comforted as they gaze upon the Judge, and know him as the Mediator who counted nothing too precious to be given for their ransom. They will not be distracted with apprehensions of being forgotten or overlooked, or dealt with according to their manifold failures in obedience. They will remember, that they have entered into everlasting covenant with that majestic personage, before whom the human race is marshalled. They will be upheld by the thought, that he is none other than the great High Priest of their profession, one who loves them with a love that passeth knowledge, and who has provided for the divine honour in providing for their forgiveness and acceptance, and who would violate the most solemn pledges if he suffered them to perish, and were they not to be his members. And, therefore, as the wicked shall seek to hide themselves from the Judge, as knowing him so fitted for the office that they cannot escape, so the righteous shall go in hope and confidence to his tribunal, regarding him as their surety, and certified of his sympathy. Thus each class, the one by the passionate cry to the rock and to the mountain, the other, by that holy assurance which proves that it takes to itself the words of the prophet, "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us;" each class, we say, furnishes evidence of how just and yet how merciful is the appointment of the Redeemer of all to be the Judge of all; and it tells out in accents, understood and felt by those eager spectators, who flock from every quarter of creation to behold and approve the dealings of their God, that it must indeed be in righteousness that the world shall be judged, seeing that it was before the Mediator Christ, that St. John saw the dead, small and great, stand.

But this leads us to our concluding point, *the thorough righteousness of the whole procedure of the judgment*. We stay not to examine the assertion of the text in regard to the opening of the book in which human actions are entered. It is evident that nothing is to be gathered from these figurative

representations, but that an exact account is kept of the life of every individual; so that when he is arraigned, all the particulars of his conduct will be produced, and made to determine the tenor of his sentence. "The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Though no man can be saved by his works, every man shall be judged according to his works. If he have believed on Christ (and this is the single appointed mode of salvation), the sincerity of his faith will be proved by his works, and therefore, in being appointed to everlasting life, he will be "judged according to his works." If he have not relied on the merits of his Saviour, the want of faith will be evidenced by the deficiency of his works; and therefore will he also, as to everlasting misery, be judged according to his works. And over and above this general decision, "according to his works," we believe that every particular of conduct will have something corresponding to it in final retribution. Indeed, the brief description, that the judgment will be "in righteousness," comprehends all that can well be advanced on this topic. In righteousness: there shall be no escape for those who by the terms of the Gospel deserved to die, and no condemnation for such as have closed with the offer of forgiveness. The cloak of wickedness shall not disguise it, nor the humility of the lowly cause them to be overlooked. In righteousness: the kings of the earth, and the noble, and the mean, and the learned, and the ignorant, all shall appear on the same level, and human distinctions be no further recognized, as the business of trial goes forward, than as furnishing items in the great sum of human accountableness. In righteousness: every man shall be dealt with in conformity with that rule, that "where much has been given, much will be required, where little has been given, little will be required;" the heathen shall have *his* standard of trial, and the Christian *his*; while amongst all those who have been privileged with the Gospel, exact reckoning will be made of the talents of each, and the opportunities and the privileges of each. In righteousness: actions shall be estimated by their motives, by their intrinsic worth, and not by their pomp and their showiness; and the cup of cold water, given in the name of a disciple, shall gain the reward of a disciple, denied to the profuse succours which ostentation may have imparted. Yes; the cup of cold water shall not be forgotten. The bounty which you may this day exercise towards these poor children shall be written down in the ponderous book, and produced hereafter as a witness in your favour. And if, as is too frequently the case on these occasions, you come to hear, and not to give, so that, out of an immense multitude of listeners, only few will vouchsafe even a scanty contribution to the necessitous, we dare not doubt, that this indifference to the wants of the poor will be traced in dark lines on the mysterious page, and give evidence as the last judgment goes forward. The dead, small and great, are to stand before God. The young and the old will be there; the children of the school for which I plead will be there; the many now in infancy, and to whom this school, if duly supported, may yet give Christian education, will be there; and others will be there who may have been excluded from this school, because those invited to support it have refused all assistance, or given it in niggard measure. There may be voices declaring that there would have been an asylum for them, beneath whose roof they might have been trained for immortality, had not some who are standing around turned a deaf ear to the claims of the institution, and thus crippled its resources, and withheld it from doing more.

O, which of you would be the man to have this testimony borne against him, when the dead, small and great, are gathered before the Lord?

I think it quite unnecessary to add more in regard to the school which now solicits support. It has been so long established, and it has so proved its character as an admirable institution, that I abstain from enlarging on its merits, because they are generally conceded, and because therefore the setting them forth, as it might imply doubt, would only tend to disparage it. I only remark, that you are not to confound this school with an ordinary charity school. It has a higher character, and therefore your contributions should be proportionably liberal. This society boards, clothes, and educates, fifty-one girls, taking the entire charge of them, until old enough for service. It thus differs widely from the common parochial schools; and we trust you will mark your sense of difference by a more than common bounty. Our appeal to you is based on the solemnities of the judgment. This our assembling will not terminate when a few minutes hence this vast audience will be dispersed. Sabbaths die not, and sermons die not: they pass away, but only to be traced in the great register of God, and to revive when the trumpet-blast awakens the dead. Again we tell you, that the judgment will be conducted in righteousness, that God may be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges. Such is the character of the trial, of which each amongst us must necessarily be the subject. Righteousness: so that nothing shall escape the Judge, and nothing impose on the Judge, and nothing embarrass the Judge. If found in Christ, there is no adversary that can accuse us; if not members of the Mediator, no power that can absolve. "Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men: would that we could persuade *you!* We mean not merely persuade you to be liberal this day to poor children, who, unless succoured by such institutions as that for which we now plead, may go defenceless to the judgment, and have nothing to shield them against the out-break of wrath. We mean not merely this: the great way to make you care for *others* is to make you care for *yourselves*. If solicitous to be yourselves found in Christ at the judgment, why you cannot be indifferent to the condition of the multitudes by whom you are surrounded. And, therefore, we again say, would that we could persuade you! Is there no voice from the "great white throne"—nothing startling in the opened books, no eloquence in the blast of the archangel—nothing terrible in the doom, "Depart, ye cursed"—nothing beautiful in the words, "Come, ye blessed?" I cannot deal with you if you are insensible to the argument of the judgment-seat. If you can go away, and be as worldly as ever, as indifferent as ever, as much the slave of sensuality, or ambition, or covetousness, now that you have beheld the Son of man coming in the clouds, and heard, as it were, your own names proclaimed, what can we say to you? If you can do—what perhaps, many of you have often done before—refuse to contribute even a little towards supporting institutions, which labour to diminish the sum of human wretchedness, to instruct the ignorant, and reclaim the wandering—you can do this, now that you have seen the dead, small and great, stand before God, and marked how the neglected poor witness against the churlish and the selfish, and how careful a memorial is preserved of benevolence, and how liberal a reward is apportioned, what can we say to you? Indeed we feel that we have exhausted the moral armoury, we have no more energetic motives on which to rest our appeal. We can but pray for you, for there is yet room for prayer,

if any amongst you—though heartily do we trust the description is inapplicable—if any amongst you be utterly careless of his own soul, and therefore utterly neglectful of the souls of others—we can still pray that God would put sensibility into stone, and give you feeling enough to feel for yourselves, and then we shall not be without proof that you can feel for such destitute objects as the children who now throw themselves on your protection.

## THE RESURRECTION THE DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE.

“WE are so accustomed, from our earliest infancy, to believe implicitly the doctrine of the soul’s immortality—it is taught us, I might almost say, in our cradles—and so wound up with all the institutions of religion, and all the associations of life, that we pass into a comparative forgetfulness of its awful stature; and receiving it as a thing of course, overlook it as a truth of the most stupendous dimensions. We forget, amid the multiplicity of truth which even natural religion will now profess to put forth of a future state, that the proudest and most acute philosophy which ever arose amidst the wisest of heathen nations wrestled with strugglings which were mighty, but which were wholly ineffectual, to throw themselves into the deep regions which lay beyond the grave, and to snatch some fragments of knowledge which might be held up to the admiration and gaze of a world lying in ignorance. We forget that always, previous to the appearance of Christ on earth, and independent of the assistance of divine communication, there certainly have been men gifted above their fellows, who pondered deeply on futurity, and grappled with the mysterious shadows of some coming destinies; yet a luminous doubt was, after all, the very summit of their attainments, and a splendid conjecture the highest result of their most laborious searchings after truth. Even if human science had revealed with the general development of the fact, that man, frail as he seems and feeble, doth yet carry in himself a spark of celestial fire, which can no more be quenched than can that Deity which is the light of the universe: still, that bone should come again to bone—that the dust which is scattered to the winds of heaven shall be compounded once more, into shape and symmetry, and that the rude heaps of the charnel house shall resolve themselves into living forms—that corruption shall put on incorruption, and mortal put on immortality—O, there never would be philosophy which could master this: it was above it—it was beyond it: and while familiarity with the truth takes off something of the strangeness of the marvel; yet I pray you to remember, when you see a grave prepared, and the coffin lowered, and the tears of the mourners almost dried up by the brilliant thought that the body of the brother or sister which they thus commit to so cold a custody shall not only moulder or waste away, but shall stir at length in its narrow home, and throw off, as with a giant’s strength, the ponderous burthen of the sepulchre, and come forth with that body glorified and purified which is now encompassed with all the dishonours of death—when, I say, you behold a spectacle like this, a spectacle which would be deemed a most unaccountable prodigy if it were not of common occurrence—O, it is the soul’s loftiest triumph—a triumph over the wreck of all that is material and sensible—a triumph over bone, and flesh, and sinew, dislocated and decomposed and shattered;—then I pray you to give the honour alone where the honour is due, to ascribe the victory to the true and actual conqueror, and to remember that the Gospel of Christ is the Gospel of the resurrection; and that until the Redeemer appropriated the character to himself, there was never a being who could have dreamt in the wildest dream of enthusiasm of uttering such words as these—‘I am the resurrection and the life.’”—REV. H. MELVILL, A.M.



## THE PREACHING OF PAUL.

REV. J. LEIFCHILD,

CRAVEN CHAPEL, REGENT STREET, APRIL 17, 1856.

"After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; and found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome :) and came into them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tent-makers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."—ACTS, xviii. 1—6.

MEN of different tastes visit foreign countries, or read the history of their ancient cities, with very different views and sentiments. The traveller who visits in person or imagination the ancient cities of Greece and Rome, goes, generally speaking, to inspect the monuments of art which those extraordinary people have erected. He talks of the "breathing statues," the "speaking canvas," the lofty columns, the splendid temples, the vast buildings, the remains of ancient grandeur compared with the productions of modern art, which raise his admiration of the advance of the former. The statesman and the legislator view these cities in a very different manner: they inquire what progress they made in municipal and civil government; they can fight all their battles over again; they view the heroes passing before them in all their former grandeur, and look at the processions of their consuls and legislators. The literary man takes a different view from these. "Shew me;" says he, "their writings; let me see their shady groves, their porticoes, their rostrums; and by these let me measure the intellect of that extraordinary people." The Christian need not be a stranger to any of these views; but there is one view which claims pre-eminence over them all. He inquires what progress they made in religion; what they obtained by all their searchings into the secrets of nature, in the knowledge of the true God, his character, and his worship, and his purposes respecting them. He is equally surprized and grieved to find, that all their wisdom in this respect is turned to folly. He sees them displacing the true God, and bowing to a variety of deities of their own creating, bowing down to stocks and stones, the work of their own hands, offering homage to their fellow men, and to the most contemptible creatures, and performing their service with the most abominable obsequies, and the most cruel and sanguinary rites. He perceives their fallen, and degraded, and ridiculous notions of religion, forming a deep contrast with their attainments in every other department. Their bright natural light is associated with the deepest and blackest religious

darkness: and thus he observes them proceeding from generation to generation, and from age to age, through a long period of time, without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world, going through life forgetful of him, and entering eternity to encounter his wrath. "Merciful God," he says, "by this fact thou teachest me the vanity of human wisdom to find out thee; thou impresses me with the value of the divine revelations of the Gospel; as the morning chases away the night, so this dispels the thick darkness that envelopes the nations. O may it speedily shine more extensively, till every vestige of the former darkness be removed, and all the nations of the world walk in the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Christ Jesus."

These remarks have been suggested by the record contained in the chapter before us, and in the preceding chapters, of the labours of St. Paul in ancient Greece, during his second apostolical journey. When we last discoursed to you on these topics, we found the apostle at Athens, pointing out to the infatuated people before the judges of the Areopagus, the folly of their superstitions, and calling on them to worship the true God who made the heavens and the earth and all things, and Jesus Christ whom he had appointed to the office of Saviour and universal Judge. He saw them fail to receive the Gospel through the pride of their hearts; and though he produced converts in almost every other place, he produced none at Athens, or at least with very few exceptions. Finding, therefore, that there was nothing more for him to do in that celebrated city, he sent Timothy and his companions, who had joined him, back to Thessalonica, to comfort the church formed by his previous labours, and himself departed to Corinth, another celebrated city of Greece, the metropolis, indeed, of that province, and famous as having two celebrated harbours, one to the Eastern, and the other to the Western part of the world. There, as was his custom, he entered into the synagogue, and proclaimed to the Jews and the proselyte Gentiles, the great truths concerning Jesus Christ, but with various, and comparatively little success. As, however, he stayed here for a considerable time, and his labours were accompanied with extraordinary circumstances, we must dwell a little on his visit to this place, as it became the means of laying the foundation of that church there, which afterwards became celebrated, not only for its gifts, but, alas, for its disorders and irregularities, and to which he wrote two epistles, directed to them, contained in the New Testament. It will be for the purpose of understanding those, as well as magnifying the grace of God in him during his labours at this place, that we pause and meditate on Paul preaching the Gospel.

Many of you, I believe, are acquainted with the history of Corinth. You may know that about a century and a half before the birth of Christ it was conquered and laid waste by the Romans, but being a maritime city it quickly recovered a portion of its former celebrity, became crowded with inhabitants, loaded with wealth, and degraded with dissipation. It cultivated, however, the fine arts: oratory, rhetoric, and eloquence, were especially in great repute: one of their most favourite gods was the god of eloquence. It was celebrated for its skill in art: who has not heard of *Corinthian columns*? Even to this day, in our country, they are imitated and admired, and will probably be so, for their simplicity and beauty, to the end of time. But it was given over to voluptuousness. I say all in a word when I say, that, in this respect, it was

the disgrace of Greece itself. I may mention one historical fact in confirmation of this—that the temple of Venus stood in the midst of the city, and that one thousand prostitutes were daily employed in serving at the public expense. The bestial vices of our nature were here held in esteem: the observation of the poet was falsified that “vice to be hated needs but to be seen.” It was seen *here* to be admired and applauded. It was the master-trick of Satan, by which he sought to overwhelm the world with corruption, and to bring the sensualities of our nature into esteem. Vice, therefore, at Corinth, was deified in the personification of their gods and goddesses. And, my brethren, in this later age, and this enlightened country, where the evil of sin is known, its offensiveness to the Deity understood, and its exposure to his future wrath fearfully revealed, so fearful are its workings in our nature, that it breaks forth notwithstanding. What, then, must it have done when all these barriers were removed, and when, in addition to the natural delight of gratifying these propensities, were added the incentive that they pleased the gods, and procured their approbation. It was as if sin had plunged mankind into a second fall still deeper than the first: heavenly creatures became earthly by the first, but now the still more dismal features were added to the character of *sensual* and *devilish*.

Such was Corinth at the time the Apostle entered the city, and began to preach the Gospel in the Jewish synagogue. I find four things connected with his labours there, well deserving, in my opinion, of a distinct and serious consideration.

The first relates to HIS ABODE AND MANNER OF LIFE. He found two aged Christians there of the names of Aquila and Priscilla, who had come from Rome to settle in that city. They probably had been converted at Rome by the preaching of some of the converts at the day of Pentecost in Judea on their return to the imperial city. Their departure from Rome was hastened by the edict of the emperor Claudius, banishing all Jews from that city. With them Paul soon became acquainted, and went and abode with them, and wrought with them at their occupation of tent-makers for his maintenance. This art he had learnt in his youth; for it was the custom of Jewish parents whatever was the condition of their children in future life, always to teach them some handicraft occupation, on which they might fall back in case of reverse of fortune. This custom served the apostles on the present occasion, and on other occasions; but he wrought now for his maintenance that he might not be chargeable to the inhabitants of Corinth, and so be represented as preaching the Gospel for hire—which might have formed an obstruction in the way of their reception of it. You know that the false Apostle who succeeded him there did endeavour to bring this charge against him, but he repudiated it by an appeal to this fact, which showed the reason and the propriety of his conduct now. Not that that conduct is to be drawn into a precedent; he did not relinquish the right, though for prudent reasons he saw fit to forego the claim. In the epistle which he afterwards wrote to the converts of this place, he asserts the right; he tells them that he who ministered to them in spiritual things should reap of their carnal things; and that as God ordained under the law that the ox should not be muzzled who trod out the corn, but he fed at the common expense, so Christ himself hath ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. Those narrow-minded persons, therefore,

who are unwilling to allow ministers who labour for them to share in their temporal comforts, and plead the example of the Apostle as their justification, may learn their mistake. In so doing they violate a law of Christianity, and show such an indifference to the ministry of the word as will make us fear that Christ will withhold his blessing from them: for it is this point to which the Apostle afterwards refers, when he says, "He that sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth plentifully shall reap also plentifully."

We may learn from the Apostle's conduct, the folly of those persons who affect to despise trade. The artificial distinctions of society are very numerous and very arbitrary—some of them very contemptible, especially those who affect to despise an honest and honourable occupation. Let such persons remember, that Jesus Christ was the son of a carpenter; and that the great Apostle, with all his natural and acquired gifts, sent by Christ himself to preach the Gospel, did not deem it beneath him to work at the art of tent-making for his livelihood.

I cannot help reflecting what a solace must be the company of these two pious persons, while working with them, and conversing with them, in the midst of all the opposition which he met with from the Jews. How would they talk together of the truths of Christianity! What a fund of materials for interesting conversation does the revelation of the Gospel furnish! What are all the stories of the mythologies of the heathen, compared with the fact of the Gospel revelation—the divine philanthropy in the gift of his Son to be our Redeemer—the transformation of Christ in assuming our nature—his ignominious death on the cross—his resurrection from the grave—the work of the Holy Ghost in our hearts—our rising from the grave—our appearance at the judgment-seat—the misery of eternal torment—the felicity of eternal glory; what in the mythology of the heathen is to be found compared with these amazing facts! O what depths are here which lead to thoughts and conversations which increase our knowledge by mingling our sentiments together in discourse! But is there not reason to fear that the very heathen talk more about their ridiculous deities to each other than some Christians about the sublimities of the Gospel of the Son of God! Not so the Apostle Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla: and the messengers of Christ would beguile the hours away while they discoursed of the wonderful things contained in this book, and presented to your view as the matter for your conversation.

Secondly, THE AMAZING ASSIDUITY AND INDEFATIGABLE DILIGENCE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL. His occupation did not prevent him preaching every Sabbath-day at least: in the synagogue he publicly proclaimed the truths concerning the Messiah, showing that the prophecies of the Scriptures respecting Messiah were fulfilled to the very letter in the life, character, and history of Jesus of Nazareth. By a careful induction of particulars he pointed out the actual correspondence and agreement between the original and the portraiture exhibited beforehand. Many of these prophecies were of such a nature as that they could not have been fulfilled by the individual himself in his own person, because they related to the time, and circumstances, and means, and the will of others, over which he had no power, and on which he could exert no influence. Such were the prophecies relating to the particular time and place of the birth of the Messiah, and the person of his mother, that she was to be a

virgin of the house and family of David, and of the tribe of Judah. Such were the prophecies relating to the rejection of him by his countrymen, notwithstanding the miracles which he wrought for the consolation of Israel; the betrayal of him into the hands of his enemies by one of his own disciples; the exact price which the enemy should offer for his betrayal; his making his death with the guilty, and his grave with the rich; and his rising again on the third day. It was the evidence that He in whom all these things met must have had these fulfilled in him by the divine power; there was no room for imposture. All these things the Apostle asserted concerning Jesus of Nazareth, confirming the assertion by the miracles which he wrought, claiming for him their acknowledgment as the Messiah of God. But prejudice blinded them. They were impressed with different views of the Messiah from those which the Apostle presented, and therefore refused to listen to him; they could not refute him, but they could shut their ears, and steel their hearts, against the truths he spoke. They treated his proclamation with disdain: and perceiving them to be infatuated, and given over by the Almighty to fill up the measure of their iniquity, he shook his garments at them, as much as to say, "I am clear from your blood; I participate not in your guilt, and will not be accessory to it: henceforth I turn to the Gentiles, and witness against you that I am clear from the blood of your guilty souls."

It appears from what follows in the chapter that the Apostle now became the subject of great depression of mind. It might have arisen from the continued rejection of him by the Jews, or from a view of the pride, and learning, and sensuality arrayed against him on the part of the Gentiles to whom he now turned; or it might have arisen from some discouraging views which he took of his bodily circumstances—his smallness of stature, his paralysis of speech, as well as the offensive nature of the truths he had to publish. Whatever it was he became much dejected; he says in his epistle, he was with them "in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling." This extraordinary man, with all his natural and supernatural endowments, was of like passions with ourselves, clothed with the same infirmities, and subject to the same temptations. But these served to set off the power of Christ, and the efficacy of his grace. Jesus Christ now appeared to him in a vision, and said, "Fear not; I am with thee, and no man shall hurt thee: stay, and labour in this place, for I have much people in this city." And is he not present still with his ministers at every stage of their labours? What but that gracious presence could keep them from fainting under their discouragements and difficulties!

You learn, also, that the people of Christ are his before they are converted. "I have much people in this city." They were his by the eternal decree. Every converted man was given to Christ before the foundation of the world; and he may say of himself, looking back to that period, "When I was without God, and without hope in the world"—as to all saving knowledge of him. Many converted persons here may say, looking back to that period, "Preserved in Christ Jesus and called."

The message of Jesus to the Apostle comforted and encouraged his mind: he therefore hired a house next door to the synagogue, that he might catch the Jews, if, notwithstanding their prejudices, they choose to stray in and hear. Here he continued to preach for the space of eighteen months, with the greatest success. And here, besides all his labours, he found time to write the first of

those divine epistles which form the last and best part, as to the development of the mind of God, of our New Testament—the first to the Thessalonians to whom he had sent Timothy and his companion for their comfort—an epistle which contains those arguments for the divinity of our religion which has been the greatest use to the church through all successive ages. What an invaluable treasure do these epistles furnish to the church of God! Here we have the fullest development of the mind of God concerning the destinies of our race: particularly are we indebted to the Apostle Paul, who wrote fourteen out of the twenty-one. Blessed be the Lord for the skill he gave to this Apostle in the use of the pen, and for the diligence he enabled him to manifest in its employment; the record of which, in a manner, make him present with us, and go to prevent the wish so passionately expressed by Augustine, to have heard Paul in the flesh. By these, being dead he yet speaketh to us in our Christian temples almost every Sabbath-day: the earthly materials of conveying his sentiments in letters and words may perish, but they will be transferred with other materials, and the mind exhibited in these writings will never expire. “The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever: and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.”

Thirdly, THE CHARACTER AND EFFECT OF HIS MINISTRY. He tells us himself that he “came not with enticing words of men’s wisdom,” nor with “excellency of speech:” alluding to the art of oratory then and there in repute; the matter to be discussed being arranged with the nicest order, the periods rounded with the greatest care, and even the tones and modulation of the speaker’s voice adjusted with the utmost skill. But there was less of all this in the apostle’s preaching at Corinth than any where else—less of method, argument, and order than in any other place. “I use,” he says, “great plainness of speech;” for this obvious reason, that the effects might be attributed to nothing but the power of truth. How deaf was the apostle to applause! He could have obtained admiration for his oratory, but he chose to lose sight of himself in the naked splendour of the truths he exhibited, as the high-priest was concealed amidst the blaze of his own radiance.

The topics of his ministry were also very few. They were chiefly the doctrine of justification by faith in a crucified Saviour, and of the sanctifying energies of the Holy Spirit: truths, my brethren, to which your ears are not strangers; and truths which to this moment have lost nothing of their original efficacy wherever they are received in the heart, and suffered to influence the conduct.

The effect of the simple proclamation of these truths were prodigions. It appears that the character of the inhabitants of these places, before their conversion, was of the most flagrant and abandoned description. They were slanderers, covetous persons, idolaters, abusers of themselves with one another, given over to voluptuousness. They had wallowed in their crimes for years; they were steeped and dyed in the very filth and ordure of these vices. They go and shake off these vices by the power of truth; the Ethiopian changes his skin, and the leopard his spots; they become transformed in the renewing of their mind; their bodies become the temples of the Holy Ghost; they “hate the very garments spotted by the flesh,” and “perfect holiness in the face of

the Lord." Such were the amazing effects of the preaching of these truths by the apostle Paul at Corinth.

One does not wonder that the ancient fathers triumphed so much as they did in these amazing facts of the preached Gospel. I will read you an extract from the writings of two of them. The first is from Ignatius. "The reason" says he, "why philosophy could never do so much good in the world as Christianity is obvious; because that was not suited to all capacities, and required such a skill in the arts to attain, as could not be possessed by men who yet were as capable as others of being made happy. And how inefficacious the precepts of philosophy have been appears by the philosophers themselves, who so far from having command by them over their masterless passions have been fain to confess that nature was too strong to be kept in by such weak reins. But what great demands the divine precepts have on the souls of men daily experience shows. See the changes they have wrought by the energies residing in them, and accompanying them. Give me a man who is *wrathful, malicious, unbridled*: with a few of the words of God, I will render him placid as a lamb. Give me a man *covetous, avaricious, close-fisted*: I will turn him back to be liberal, having his hand filled with large gifts. Give me a *timid* man, one who fears and stumbles at every thing, and who is terrified at the summons of death: he shall condemn now the cross, and face the roaring bull. Give to me the *libidinous* man, the fornicator and adulterer and unclean: you shall see him contented, sober, chaste. Give to me a *cruel* man, a man with an appetite for blood: his fury shall be changed into true clemency. Give to me an *unjust* man, a wine-bibber and sinner: he shall become instantly prudent, equitable, and upright. And these changes shall be lasting, not temporary, to relapse again into worse disorders; but the evil of the sinful disorder shall be so instilled into the soul, that they shall never recover strength to make head again."

The other extract is from the work of Origen against Celsus. Some persons have republished parts of the works of Celsus, the infidel; it is a great pity that the masterly works of Origen, referring to what took place in his own time, have not also been translated and published as a counteractive. "I triumph over you, Celsus, on this ground; for what evidence can be stronger of the fact, that a divine power is in the doctrines of the Gospel, than the great alteration wrought by it to those who are influenced by them; so that from being vicious, debauched, and dissolute, it made them temperate, sober, and religious. The doctrines of Christ have converted the most wicked persons who embraced it from all their debaucheries to a life most suited to nature and reason, and to the practice of all virtue. The church of God which is at Corinth, disciplined to Christ now, compared with other cities, shine among them like lights in the world; for who can but confess that even the worse parts of the Christian church exceed the best of the popular assemblies? The church of God at Corinth is quiet and peaceable, because she approved herself to God; but in the popular assemblies there are seditious tumults, and in nothing is to be compared with the church of God. So it is with the church of Alexandria, and other places, compared with all their assemblies. Any candid inquirer after truth, will exceedingly wonder how such fair islands appear in such a sea of wretchedness; how these churches of God should be planted in such rude and profane places. If these things be so, how can it be but most rational to adore the

divinity of Jesus, who is able to accomplish such things, and that not only in one, two, or three, as philosophy may have done, or upon a few purposely selected; but in all sorts of persons, and all ages, chiefly most wicked, and illiterate, and untameable. Here we may say, this is not the *finger* of God, but his *outstretched arm*."

Fourthly and lastly, THE CLOSE OF HIS APOSTLESHIP AT CORINTH, AND HIS DEPARTURE TO ANOTHER PLACE. The Jews were exceedingly angry at his continuance there, and his success. Notwithstanding his extraordinary endowments as a man, the blamelessness of his life, the inoffensiveness of his conversation, his laborious endeavours to do good, the wonderful miracles which he wrought, and enabled others to perform, and the amazing success of his preaching in turning men from Satan unto God—notwithstanding all, I say, their rage was kindled against him the more; for envy follows merit, and malice always lurks in its rear. Their malice, though it had not broken out, had never slept, but only waited for an opportunity to shew itself; and that opportunity has come. The pro-consul from Rome, has come to reside at Corinth. His name was Gallio, the elder brother of Seneca, the celebrated friend and tutor of Nero, and a man who appears to have imbibed the most correct views of civil government. The Jews, availing themselves of his arrival, caused the Apostle Paul to be apprehended, and carried him before Gallio, charging him with having disturbed the unanimity of the city, and with preaching things contrary to their law; and they demanded his punishment. But Gallio was an upright judge, and too well understood the nature of his office to fall in with their humour. "If," said he, "it were a matter of wrong; if this man had done any lawless act, or injured another, reason would, and justice would, that I should bear with you; but if it be a question concerning matters of religion and opinion, I leave that to its proper tribunal, the tribunal of reason and argument, not to be meddled with by the civil powers."

The Jews did the best thing men can do when they have nothing to say—they said nothing. They could not contravene the force with which he spoke: and the Greeks perceiving them foiled in their malice, laid hold of Sosthenes, the new ruler of the synagogue (who it is supposed had set them on), and beat him away from the judgment-seat. And when it was told the judge, he interfered not in the matter, but deeming it a religious dispute, left it to be settled by words or by the pen, instead of an appeal to the civil power.

But his conduct has been strangely misinterpreted on this occasion, by those who are led away by the sound of Scripture rather than with its sense. Because it is said "Gallio cared for none of those things," it has been supposed that he treated them with an indecent levity. He has been made the prototype of all wilful neglectors of the Gospel, and his name has been held up as the symbol of all sorts of careless and inconsiderate persons: whereas it means nothing more, than that he did not choose to interfere with the civil power in matters of religious polity. Would that all judges and magistrates that have succeeded him had acted upon the same enlightened views! To what have those persecutions which have filled the world with deeds of cruelty, and stained the annals of our race with blood—to what have they been owing, but to the ridiculous notion, that the civil power was to be employed in quelling religious controversy? Let us hope that the world has become more enlightened. Civil



things to Cæsar; religious things to God. For my conduct as a citizen I am accountable to my fellow creatures: but, provided my actions are religious, and not, under pretence of being religious, subversive of the welfare of society, for my religious opinions I am accountable to none.

"Let Cæsar's dues be ever paid  
To Cæsar and his throne;  
But consciences and souls were made  
For God, and God alone."

The Apostle at Corinth was under a vow, and soon after he determined to take his departure, and again to visit the cities of Syria. He sailed, therefore, from the port of Corinth, the eastern port of Corinth, having shaved himself there because of his being under a vow. I think this vow refers to one he had taken after he had begun to preach to the Gentiles, that till he departed from them he would suffer his hair to grow, which was a celebrated thing among them: so that he became "a Gentile to the Gentiles." But when the time of his residence amongst them expired, he was released from his vow; and as he was going he shaved himself that he might become as "a Jew to the Jews," that he might win some out of all people. And he went round by the church at Jerusalem. It is said in the chapter that he "saluted the church"—"the church" by way of eminence—"in that city, and preached at Antioch, in Syria," where he concluded his second apostolical journey, thanking God in the midst of his brethren, and taking courage.

You may see, my brethren, from what has passed before you, the different effect of the preaching of the Gospel in different places: in one place it produces little or no effect, in the other it produces marvellous effects. Paul met with little opposition at Athens, and yet he produced no converts there, with the exception of two or three persons: he met with the greatest opposition at Corinth, and there he was surrounded with converts. How often is this the case in our own day, and in our own country! A minister shall be labouring at a place for some time with no result; but on removing to another he shall become an instrument of the greatest good. The same Gospel shall be introduced into two destitute villages equally unfavourably or favourably disposed towards it: in the one it is met with total indifference or decided opposition; in the other it shall awaken attention, excite interest, and converts shall rise up on every side. You know these are effects; how do you then account for them but by a divine power accompanying the promulgation of the truths of the Gospel, and regulating the effect, not according to the anticipations on the part of man, but according to the eternal purposes of God? "I have much people in this city."

What is said of towns, and cities, and countries, applies to human hearts. Wherever the Gospel comes with power to the human heart, it is the effect of previous design. God intended it so to come; and you may see in confirmation of this remark, that there is hardly a converted person in the world, that does not trace divine providence, concurring with grace in effecting it, in the casting of his society, in the foundation of his connexions, in the books he was led to read, the sound of the ministry under which he was placed; all of which were conducted to his very door. All these things worketh that self-same Spirit, which is, I say, the agent, and whose influence, like the wind, "bloweth where it listeth." O blessed Spirit, if in these thy sovereign dispensations thou hast

breathed in this, or in any other place, into our souls, and brought the Gospel to our hearts!

See, my brethren, the pain and the labour of the faithful minister of Christ. What pains did the Apostle take with the inhabitants of Corinth to form them into churches of Christ! What perils and persecutions did he not endure on their account! Though he left them a flourishing church, and remarkably attached to him in person, how soon did they become corrupt! They allowed false teachers to come in among them: they separated into sections and parties, and they connived at the continuance of a member in their church who was an incestuous man, on account, perhaps, of his wealth or his reputation; yea, they tolerated a false prophet, a calumniator of the talents and gifts of Paul; and they broke down the hedge which separated them as a church from the world: they admitted to the Lord's table fornicators, and unbelievers, and adulterous persons; and they ate and drank to excess at the table of the Lord. That was their "eating and drinking unworthily," and "to their own damnation," and nothing else than that, which cannot at all apply to persons in the present day. Against that it was which St. Paul warned them, in the sixth chapter of his second epistle, when he said, "Be ye not unequally yoked together;" which does not apply to matrimony, as is generally supposed. Matrimonial connexions between believers and unbelievers is elsewhere expressly and explicitly forbidden, and almost uniformly occasions sin: but that applies to Christian communion, and is an exhortation to the Corinthians to a selection of communicants at the Lord's table; and any system which does not provide for that is not scriptural: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." All who are anxious to have the approbation of Christ will attend to that exhortation. The Apostle threatened them that if they did not act thus he would come to them with his rod, and after that he besought them to spare him that necessity: and his exhortations, and warnings, and entreaties, had their effect; the church became reformed, recovered their attachment to him, and lived in Christian love. But what pains, what labours, I say, were manifested by the Apostle; and such must be the pains and labours of every man that would make full proof of his ministry. It is not enough that he succeed in the conversion of souls, he must watch over them as one that must give an account, that he may do it with joy and not with grief: that they be not led away by passion, that they grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ; and he must be "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." O who is sufficient for these things? Who can always come forth with freshness and energy in the work, unless assisted from on high? Pray to God that we may be faithful ministers of Christ, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Finally, the success of the Apostle's labours in Corinth was a specimen of the final triumph of the Gospel in clearing away idolatry from the earth. What could withstand the simple and faithful preaching of the truth by the Apostle Paul? Every obstacle gave way: they came from the schools of philosophy to learn wisdom from his lips: they abandoned the altars and temples of their idols to become worshippers of Christ. they emerged out of the filth and ordure of their vices to become temples of the Holy Ghost; God was their Father, and they were the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. I should be glad to know what obstacle could withstand the preaching of these truths. When once the Holy Spirit is poured out to accompany them with his divine energy, the world cannot resist its former conqueror. Do we not know from the sure sayings of our God, that the time will come when the proclamation of these truths shall recover the whole world from the pollution of superstition and idolatry? It is said in one of the Psalms, "The ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the kingdoms of the nations shall worship before him." Among the nations the time shall come, too, when there shall be an universal profession of Christianity on the earth, and the visible subjection of the whole world to Christ: not a forced subjection, but a voluntary one, the result of knowledge, and truth, and grace. "They shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the earth shall worship before thee." Abundance of worship shall characterize the latter day. A Christian shall be able to go to no part of the world where there shall not be a place for the worship of God in Christ, and where he will not meet with fellow worshippers to join with him in service; and worship shall be restored to its primitive purity. God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and truth. In spirit as opposed to carnal conception, and in truth as figurative rites and ceremonies. Not that every individual of the human race, numerically speaking, will then be converted any more than in the first ages; for where on that principle would be the material of the future and final apostacy? But the vast majority in every part of the earth, in every sea-girt island, and in every spacious continent, will be on the side of Christ. There will be a visible subjection of the whole world to Jesus Christ. How long that period will literally continue perhaps it is impossible to say, since the glory and beauty of that church for one single year, may be as much as has been for a thousand years in former times. But while that period lasts earth will become a kind of heaven; the tabernacle of God will be with men, and he will dwell among them in the brightest displays of his truth, and holiness, and grace. The contentions of nations shall cease, the happiest interchanges of love and good feeling shall take place between all people of the earth, and the former causes of misery shall be so reduced as to seem to have ceased to exist: the Lord God will swallow up death in victory, and wipe away every tear from every eye.

But who shall live when God doth thus appear? We look to the millennium, but we always speak of it as at a great distance. For aught we know it is even now begun. There must be a period of preparation, and that will take some time. We are living in a period of active preparation of the world for the reception and acknowledgment of the claims of Christ: and when that preparation shall have gone on, and the means of grace be extended through the earth, how rapidly will the conversion of the nations come to pass. The images of prophecy seem to me to denote its rapidity. What else is the meaning

of the angel *flying* through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to all nations that dwell on the earth. What can it import but the multiplication of institutions of Christian missionaries to every part of the habitable world. And as to the growth of converts in those days, how is it represented? "They shall spring up as willows by the water courses, yea, they shall be like the drops of the morning dew formed in the space of a few hours, and crowning and bedecking every object in creation." It is said that "a nation shall be born in a day, and the swift-winged messengers shall not be able to carry fleet enough the tidings of the conversion of one nation after another." We are living, I say, in times that are preparatory to this great change; let us see that we are lending a hand to the blessed work: let us remember that one great means for preparing the world will be the cultivation of a spirit of peace and unity among Christians of all denominations. The church has been broken into parties; the mirror has been shivered into fragments: there must come a spirit of union ere there will come a spirit of blessing. Not that all sects are to merge into one; not that there is to be a union of sects and parties as such, but a union of the righteous out of all sects and denominations. As it was said of philosophy, that was not philosophy which belonged to a sect, but that was philosophy which was true in every sect; so of Christianity, that is not Christianity that belongs to a sect, but that which is true and righteous in every sect. The denomination for the one church is not the aggregate of churches and of sects, but of the faithful.

"O come the day when every sect shall fall,  
And Christ the living head, be all in all!"

Blessed Saviour, I see thee in my mind's eye, as thou wilt be recognized by the faithful in the world in that future day, I see thee in that glory which is thine by universal acknowledgment. O come the day, when earth with her many tongues shall proclaim, "Jesus Christ is Lord of all, to the glory of the Father!"

## THE HIDDEN GOSPEL.

REV. J. VAUGHAN,

TRINITY CHURCH, CHELSEA.

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“But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.”—2 CORINTHIANS, iv. 3.

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How solemnly affecting to a Christian's mind are those two simple words, *a lost soul!* They seem to say, “Ask not where that poor soul is to be found, for it is lost. Once it was God's own child, once Jesus died for it, but it is lost. No father owns it; no angel loves it now. It has been taken far away from us, and we shall see it no more. A long while we mourned over it, but now eternity has closed over it; it is lost for ever; the last day will come when the Father will make up his jewels, but that one has dropped from his crown. He will read out of the Lamb's book of life the names of the redeemed, but for him, there is found no record. The family of Christ meet together round the throne, and many a happy spirit—ten thousand times ten thousand—swell the hallelujahs; but *one* voice is silent for ever.”

And is it possible, brethren, that at this moment there may be before me here one of these poor lost souls—one, with whom, when we part on earth, we shall never meet again through eternity? Does the heart-searching inquiry rise up in any breast, “Am I sure that at this very instant God has not written on my soul that awful word *lost?*” And shall we not, by God's help, try to say one word to-day to that unhappy soul, ere it be too late; lest, wandering on, hour by hour, and step by step, dark and blinded, he shall stray beyond the reach of a Saviour's call; and when he dies, his blood shall be required at our hands? Shall we not try to put forth one hand to lift the veil which Satan has cast between your God and you? As we must answer for it before God's judgment-seat, it shall be our single end and fervent prayer, with such plain and affectionate and unwearied boldness, to preach to you Christ crucified, that if indeed our Gospel be hid to you, we at least may be innocent of your crime; and upon your own souls shall be the guilt. And O that never on some solemn day, the Almighty may call on us, your ministers, the very same who once spoke to you the winning language of the Redeemer's love, to stand forth the witnesses against your souls; to bear record before men and angels, how often God called and ye refused—he stretched forth his hands, and no man regarded. O spare us that tremendous part of the duty of every messenger of heaven the becoming the accusers of their rebellious people at the bar of the Almighty! Yet, believe it, brethren, as a most assured fact, that an hour will come at last, when we shall have to give in an account before God, of every word which in his name we have spoken to you; and for

your eternal weal or woe, we shall stand together before his throne; this very sermon will be there; and (solemn thought!) of one I shall have to say, "This man believed, Lord;" and of another, "he believed me not." But alas, for *me*, in that hour, if I shall not be found to have preached to you Christ faithfully! Alas, for *you*, if it shall have been to you a hidden Gospel. I do not believe that in all this congregation there is a single soul against which the irrevocable word is *now* gone forth. "Lost!" Miserable souls, dying souls, perishing souls, we fear, we *know* there are: dying they are, but not dead—perishing, but not yet lost. Whoever you are, the Saviour is waiting at this moment with his hand upon the latch to open the door of heaven to you. O we would not believe for a thousand worlds that there could be in the whole earth, a single soul of which we must say, "That soul is lost." No; never, whilst the Saviour pleads at God's right hand; never, while there is a drop in Judah's fountain; never, till the archangel's trumpet sounds, can there be one sinner so lost, but that now, in his day of grace, if he will return unto the Lord with weeping and penitence, his tears, for Jesus' sake, may wash out the characters of death; and God will write upon his living soul, "He was lost, and is found."

But still, brethren, while we feel assured in the mercy of our God, who would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth, that no final decree of banishment is gone out against any of you; we do not wish to hide it from you, that your souls even now, may be, and are, in imminent danger of that everlasting separation from him. You have gone from mountain to hill, till you have well nigh forgotten your resting-place. Are you not fast losing yourself in the wilderness? Are you not growing cold in your soul? Are you not far off from God? Are you not already on the verge of some deep fall, if not of final perdition? O we are very fearful lest the passing away of a single moment might make all the difference to your soul; and *that* which at this present instant, while life still lasts, we would not for all worlds pronounce of you, the next we might have to stand over your grave and write it as your epitaph, "Lost, lost for ever!" For those who are strangers to the spiritual life of the Christian here, to his fears, his conflicts, his peace, his hope, must be strangers hereafter to the heavenly inheritance. If lost to grace, you must be lost to glory. And, brethren, the being lost is not a thing of an hour; there are no sudden changes in God's ways; there is no momentary fallings into perdition. Hell is but the bottom of a ladder which you go down by a thousand steps. Are you sensible each day of an increasing disrelish for spiritual things? Is the feeling of sin less painful to you? Are you living in a more worldly, careless frame of mind. Do the troubles of life vex you? Is there less of the spirit of prayer and communion in it? Is there a rising up of the pride of your soul against the simple doctrines of faith? Then of you, in Scripture language—to you already that final state to which by your present course you are so quickly hastening, we say, You are lost; lost certainly for a season; and lost it may be—God forbid; it depends upon yourself, but it may be—lost for ever. The poor sheep that has strayed so far from the fold, and which will not hear the Shepherd's voice, though it has not yet fallen into the pit, is a lost sheep still.

Now the apostle, in the text, lays down one certain evidence by which we may judge whether we are in this awful condition of soul. The sign of a lost

state is a hidden Gospel; "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." That "if," opens to us a very solemn contemplation; it tells us, that under the preached Gospel word, there may be sitting a blind and God-forgetting soul. The light may be all around you, and you may have no eye to see the prospect which it discloses. There may be the voice of warning, or of mercy, sweeping closely by you; but your soul, untenanted of God, may send forth no echo of the Spirit to answer the call. Yes, brethren, sabbath by sabbath you may come up to the house of God, morning by morning, and every night; you may read, you may hear, you may speak of Jesus; and all the while, in Gospel light, and under Gospel privileges, there may be some souls amongst you, that shall be lost, lost! A condemnation multiplied as deep as there have been seasons wasted, and convictions stifled, and invitations spurned. Each hiding of the Gospel in your soul will have heated sevenfold the furnace of God's vengeance.

What then are we doing? It is fearful to the minister of God to remember that he stands before you no less for death to every uncontrite soul, than for life and peace to the penitent: that the same words, which, under God's blessing, may be ministering now to the comfort and edification of one man, to another, indistinguished by any outward appearance and unconscious of it himself, they are going on to swell his condemnation: for the name of Jesus is never heard in a Christian congregation, without driving the two classes which compose it into wider and wider separation. The worldly are left more carnal; the Christian more spiritual. The very light which beams so much gladness in one soul, will have darkened with its radiance another: and each man, whether he will it so or no, must leave this house to-day, a being nearer either to heaven or to hell. For O it is an awful thing to hear the Gospel; for if it is hid, it is hid to them that are *lost*. It is the great touchstone of the soul; God's trial of the heart.

How do *you* receive the Gospel? Now we must be careful to understand that God has not marked out by any irreversible decree, certain persons to whom his Gospel shall be hid; neither has he (which would be the same thing) appointed some men to perdition, and therefore, for that end, debarred their minds from receiving the light of the truth. The fact seems to be this, that wherever we read of God's hidings, they are judicial; under the allurements of Satan, you begin to devote yourself to some pursuit or pleasure of the world. Gradually you become absorbed by it: prayer is interrupted, grace is stopped, the voice of God is stifled, sin creeps over the soul; there is a spiritual slumber; a film of prejudice is formed upon the mind; it loses all its zest for true religion; some favourite indulgence, some habit of secret sin, some pride, some wilful ignorance, the world, in some of its many shapes, comes in between you and God, and casts its dark shadows over your soul. You run into deeper and deeper corruptions; you are far off from God, you are *lost*, and then, and not till then, in judgment God permits your mind to lose its power of moral discrimination. Your sin blinds you; you call evil good, and good evil; you fear the Gospel; you hate the Gospel, as you listen to it. Your mind wanders away into a thousand distractions. You see in it no beauty, no love, every thing is preferred to it, for it is "hidden." Thus the hiding of the Gospel is the last stage in the sinner's progress; it goes just before destruction; for what hope remains when the very remedy is made a poison to us? It is

the drawing away of grace, the shutting up of God's love : the soul, deserted and dark, wanders about a little while in the paths of sin, then dies and is lost. Brethren, do not delay for one instant, to put the question to your own heart, Is the Gospel hidden to my soul ?

And here I can imagine some humble child of God to make answer, " Yes, I fear it is : there is a depth in it which my mind is never able to fathom ; there is a height in it to which I can never reach. I have so very faint and imperfect an idea of the Saviour's love, I can realize it so little, and, above all, my inconsistencies of life are so many, that I fear it must be a hid Gospel to me ; I could never be what I am, if I lived indeed in the light of the truth." Then to such an one I would say, but has it shewn to you your sins ? Has it led you to depend on Christ ? Is Christ " all your salvation and all your desire, although he make it not to grow ?" In the midst of all the darkness of your soul, and though you cannot pierce the many clouds of mystery which enwrap you, and though you cannot yet, perhaps, receive many of those difficult doctrines which others do, and though all your knowledge be only that you know not, yet can you rest on Jesus as your Saviour ? Do you catch glimpses of his cross, and at moments hope you see your own sins there ? Then this moment it is enrolling itself to your view. It is the very outspreading of the light which is throwing so deep a darkness over the surrounding ignorance which remains to you. And it *will* grow, grow, till all is day ; till not one ' hidden ' thing is left, till the last veil which hangs between heaven and you is rolled away, and you shall be made perfect in glory.

And another will be writing down hard things against himself, saying, " Yes, but I feel so very little comfort, surely if I really knew the Gospel, I should have peace ;" and so brethren, you will have it presently. But the Gospel has two offices, it *wounds* before it *heals* ; it *condemns* before it *comforts*. And if God is now making it open to you its terrors, you want no other evidence that he will soon cause it to disclose to you its rich and abundant consolation. That heavy sense of sin and weakness, so far from accompanying a hid Gospel, are always the signs of its entrance into the heart. But, brethren, there is much comfort in Christ, and in store for you. You have seen but half of a Saviour's work ; you have thought of Him offended, jealous, departing, judging. Now, try your faith ; think of him returning, reconciled, dying, pleading, pitying, remembering, loving you. There is nothing at this instant which need separate your Saviour and you. He desires to be no distant, no " hidden " friend to you.

On the other hand, we can suppose another of a very different kind to be saying within himself, " This can be no hid Gospel to me, for have I not lived amongst Christians all my days ? Have I not been constant in my attendance on every means ? Have I not been partaker of both the sacraments ? And so you may ; you may have been placed in the most favoured society ; you may have enjoyed every external advantage ; you may have made use of every ordinance ; and from all you may go away each time with your heart also blinder and darker than before. " But am I so foolish and ignorant," he may say, " that what a mere child can comprehend, I, who for years have devoted myself, my mind, to the subject, can still be supposed never to have understood ?" " I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." " But



I do know the Gospel," he will reply: "I can talk familiarly on every doctrine; I am master of all its schemes; I am well known as one most conversant with sacred Scripture; there is nothing in the whole Bible hid from me." Yet you may not know the Gospel. The fuller the head, the emptier often the heart; the richer the outward fruit, often the more famishing the soul; the more of Christ professed, often the less of Him known experimentally. "But," again, that man will plead, "but look at my life, see how many prayers, how many pious deeds, what correctness, what forgiveness when I was injured, what affection to all around me." Yes, but what has been the motive which determines an action in God's sight? Has "the love of Christ" constrained you? "But I do love the Gospel," he may urge, "I like to listen to it; I am fond of it." Ah! here, brethren, rests the issue. Of what nature is your love of the Gospel? Do you like the pearl because of its setting, and not for the jewel's sake alone? Are you fond of what you find round the Gospel—the good esteem, the quieting of your conscience by having the Gospel which you attend ever ready to put as a balance to the world which you love, the pleasing of friends, or even, of the easily got character of being a religious man, and the distinction which obloquy itself can give; not to mention the many lesser charms of taste, and feeling, and eloquence, and fashion, which may adorn the Gospel which you profess to love? Remember that all this while the Gospel, for every saving purpose, may be as "hidden" from you as it was the first day you heard it preached. There may be none of its power on your heart; it may be all but another form of worldliness; an excitement, a smoothing over of the surface of things; a compromise, a vain delusion, a lie in your right hand.

Brethren, let me come a little closer to you. In your secret moments, when you are in your chamber and are still, does religion follow you there? Is it the stay of your mind? Does it guide you in the world? Has it become an influential principle in your heart, leading you to self-denial, to separation from the world, to great humility and gentleness, and to much affectionateness? Is it your feeling every day and every hour, "I am bought with a price; I am not my own?" And have you found peace in Christ? Have you a good hope that you have obtained an interest in his salvation? Do you see your title in his cross? Can you appropriate the promises? Thus are you indeed feeding on the "hidden manna." Is his word more precious to you than rubies? Are you convinced of an intimate communion with Him? Do you feel your anchor cast within the veil? Have you entered the holiest? Have you found that path which the vulture's eye hath not seen? Is "the secret of the Lord" with you?

And now, brethren, once more, before we part, we desire to put on record in the eternal books another Gospel message to your souls. We know that in the simple act we are immeasurably increasing your responsibility, at the hand of every member of this congregation—young and old, rich and poor—God will hereafter require it. The day, the hour, the spot, the name, the soul, the words—all will be written down, all will be read before the world: and we believe that in that awful hour to some of you their very words may be the bitterness which ever sounded in their ears. But, brethren, we must deliver our own souls before God. Hear, then, the last, the fullest message in all God's legacy of love to you: "The Spirit and the bride say, come; and let him that heareth

say, Come ; and let him that is athirst come ; and whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely." Already the angel has registered it in heaven ; this only will we add. If there should be any one of you, brethren (which God forbid), who can turn away from this loving Father's call, coldly and unmoved, and go back to the world and to his forgetfulness again ; if there shall be one unawakened by it, unpurified, unblessed ; it matters not how amiable may be his heart, how correct the morality of his life, *our Gospel is hid to him* ; it matters not what may be his profession ; and let these solemn thoughts ring again in his ears for ever, " If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."

## THE FOOLISHNESS AND EXCELLENCE OF PREACHING

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 REV. H. STOWELL, A.M.

 ST. PHILIP'S CHURCH, CLERKENWELL, MAY 8, 1836.
 

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"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."—1 COR. i. 12.

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GOD ordinarily employs instrumentality in the accomplishment of his purposes: but he frequently employs instrumentality so inadequate, as to make it manifest that the excellency of the power is of himself. In the procedure of his providence we can often trace this law of his divine wisdom. It was before the blast of ram's horns that the walls of Jericho fell prostrate in the dust. It was with a stone and a sling that the stripling shepherd smote to the ground the giant champion of Philistia. It was before the crash of broken pitchers that the Midianitish army fled dismayed, and every man's sword was turned against his fellow. It was beneath the simple outstretched rod of Moses that the waves of the sea clave asunder, and made a highway for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over. It was a stroke of the same rod that clave the flinty rock, and brought forth streams in the wilderness, so that the waters gushed out like a flood. It was the same rod that wrought the mighty plagues and judgments upon Egypt, plagues and judgments such as the world had not witnessed before. God puts honour upon simple things, that it may be seen that God is all, and in all, and above all; that the machinery of second causes may not hide from unbelieving man, the omnipotent hand that directs, controls, and effectuates the whole.

As in the procedure of his providence, so still more emphatically in the divine works of his grace, the law to which we have adverted obtains. "For," says the apostle, when he would humiliate all instrumentality and exalt the great agent who employs them, "For, after that in the wisdom of God (according to the good pleasure of his will) the world by wisdom," by all the efforts of unaided reason and by all the researches of human science—"knew not God," but changed the glory of the invisible Creator into the likeness of a calf that eateth hay, and into the similitude of four-footed beasts, and creeping things, the most noxious reptiles, and the vilest insects; after that the world by wisdom, thus in the lapse of century after century of pagan midnight knew not God, upon the bankruptcy of all human effort and human wisdom, it pleased God then to bring to nought the wisdom of the wise and the pride of the haughty, inasmuch as "by the foolishness of preaching it pleased God to save them that believe."

The subject before us, then, brethren, is this, on the one hand the apparent foolishness of preaching, on the other hand the real wisdom and matchless

excellency of preaching. May the Holy Spirit, whose it is to give the increase, be present, that his word may come to us in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.

The instrument ordained and employed by God from the very outset of his dealings with man, has been preaching, and that instrument, if we view it only with the superficial eye of unbelieving and sceptical man; if we view it merely as the children of this world are wont to regard it; if we keep out of sight the light given us by revelation—this instrumentality will appear supremely foolish. For how inadequate is the means itself to accomplish much! Preaching is merely the address of one worm to his fellow-worms. He speaks through their ear to their understandings and it may be to their hearts: but after all how little hath human eloquence, how little hath the powers of human persuasion, been able even on other subjects and in other fields to achieve? True, there are on record, strong and striking illustrations of the force of human eloquence, the momentary, transitory force of eloquence; as when the audience of the distinguished orator in former times wrought up by his invective, exclaimed, "Let us march against our foe!" But, after all, that effect soon passed away, and they returned to their coldness and their cowardice as before. And look at the ordinary intercourse of mankind; look at the influence and effect of mere persuasion, and mere eloquence, when brought to bear upon men, and coming in collision with their passions, their interests, and their tastes. What persuasion has not been lavished on that father that betrayed the wife of his bosom, acting a traitorous part to the children that have sprung from him, rushing still down the career of indifference to eternity: how little can all exhortation and entreaty avail with that man! I may appeal to the minds of most of yourselves, and ask whether you are not perfectly conscious how utterly inadequate to accomplish much is the persuasion of man on his fellow man. Many a parent can witness it in the bitterness of their experience: many a friend can witness it after their hopeless efforts to benefit their friends. Alas, it is but too often, that the language of caution or kindness addressed to those who are not inclined to hear us pass by them unheeded as the wind, that just goes by, and may be listened to, but is soon forgotten and leaves no impression.

But the inadequacy of the instrumentality will be still more apparent when we remember, that the first preachers of the Gospel were not highly gifted men, that they were not men that had achieved lofty things in literature, they were not men who had any advantage of station or rank, or human influence to give dignity and energy to their message; on the contrary, we find that they were unlettered fishermen, that for the most part they were men unaccustomed to speak to their fellow men other than in private; and they were men who had no excellency of speech; they were men who had nothing more, humanly speaking, than the honesty of their intentions, and the simplicity of their spirits, and the law of love which was on their lips, and the burning compassion that was in their hearts. Beyond this there was nothing of human aptitude and human excellency to fit them for the high embassy on which their Master had sent them. Taking the mass of the ministers of Christ in all ages, how very few have risen up that have had any pretensions to any thing like transcendent powers of persuasion! Looking, therefore, at preaching in

the abstract, merely as the art of persuasion by the tongue, conveying it to the head and the heart, through the affections, the instrumentality appears to be foolishness.

But if we pass on to regard the grand theme on which the preaching of the church of Christ has ever dwelt, which has ever been its supreme characteristic, the foolishness of preaching will be still more, to the eye of unbelief, obvious and egregious. For what is the grand theme on which the ministers and ambassadors of heaven have been ever led to dwell, in as far as they have been faithful to their high office, and have discharged themselves of their high and overpowering responsibility? They have preached not great and high things for men in this life; they have not told them of conquests and kingdoms here below; they have not told them of any thing that makes for their earthly interest or gain; they have not taught them how they might enrich themselves with wealth, or ennoble themselves with honour, or pamper themselves with pleasures: but what is it they tell to all to whom their message comes? They tell them of one who was in the form of a servant; whose visage was marred more than any of the sons of men; who was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; who, while the foxes had holes and the birds of the air their nests, had not where to lay his head; who was despised and rejected of men; who was betrayed and spit upon; who while he seemed to save others could not save himself; who was put to the most ignominious and agonizing death; who died, apparently unable to rescue himself, and was laid in the grave. And though we tell them of after resurrection and after glory, yet what was transacted in this life—what man can understand and discover does startle and stumble the unbelieving and the proud man of this world, so that the cross of Christ has ever been to the Jew a stumbling-block and to the Greek foolishness. The men who have sought to get rid of the offence of the cross, have sought to bury it amid the clods of heartless morality; and they have been ashamed to talk of the crucified Nazarene, the despised and lowly Jesus. And so it was with the missionaries of a false church, when they went forth to Japan: conceiving that the Japanese would be repulsed at the idea, that the Author and subject of the religion of Christian England was a crucified malefactor, they talked of Jesus in his triumph and glory, in his ascension and power, and in his divinity; but they shrouded up the cross in mystery and darkness: and the result was as it might have been anticipated, their efforts were useless: there might be proselytes but there was not one convert; there might be change of profession, but there was no conversion.

Beloved brethren, how unlikely then was the theme on which preaching is to enlarge, which it is to make its plan and its system, its commencement, its centre, and its consummation—how utterly unlikely and improbable to human wisdom was it that this should tell on the minds of men, that this should exercise a resistless energy on their hearts, that this should act as a magnet to attract their affections, and throw their whole lives into a new current!

And yet more will the foolishness of preaching strike us if we regard how deeply, how entirely, how contrary to the natural bias and bent and determined spirit of man, is that effect at which preaching aims. If it aimed to induce men to put off some conformity to earthly things; if it merely aimed to get men to comply with a few outward observances, and, if we may so speak, to compliment their Maker by just bowing the knee on the Sabbath, or in the

family, or occasionally listening to the preaching of his word on the Sunday; if it would let men, as a foul and apostate church does, commute for their sins by their stricter observances, and pay for their indulgences by their penances; if it would let man be his own saviour, and make terms of his own with his God; if it would flatter his pride and come down to his prejudices, and accommodate itself to his lusts; if it would assume the false apostacy which it has assumed in the hands of some traitorous teachers who have borne the name of Christ—then we might indeed expect that the foolishness of preaching would have some effect. But when we remember that it aims at the heart of man particularly; that its object is not so much to beautify the sepulchre as to cleanse it from its uncleanness, not to cut off a few branches and boughs of the tree, but to lay the axe at the root, to cut it down to the very root, and to graft upon the stump of the tree another and a new tree, a tree of righteousness, that God may be glorified; when it aims not merely just to get men to change profession or creed outwardly, but that it aims at getting men to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye, to go in the very face and teeth and current of all their own evil desires and lusts; when it aims at getting men to “deny themselves,” as our blessed Master so emphatically expresses it, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts; to mortify their members which are upon earth, to set at nought the smile and to despise the world that has ruled over them; to care little for the opinion of the world, and every thing for the opinion of the unseen God; to live for eternity and not for time; to make God supreme, not the world supreme; when we remember that Revelation, with the foolishness of preaching, aims at such an achievement as this! thus broad, and thus high, and thus deep, even that a man must become a new creature, that old things must pass away and all things become new—brethren, how utterly foolish, how utterly preposterous and absurd seems the mere appeal of one worm to his fellow worms, to achieve such a tremendous result as this! We feel, therefore, that judging of preaching by the mere wisdom and reason of unenlightened man, it is foolishness indeed.

But, my beloved brethren, let us let in a new light upon the subject; let us bring it to the lamp of revelation, and find what illumination we can derive from that only fountain of truth and sound judgment in all things. The wisdom and the excellency of preaching may be argued, inasmuch as *it is an ordinance of almighty God*. Alas, there have been multifarious and endless disputes about the succession of the ministry of the Gospel: but these very disputes do themselves go to prove this much at least, that the ministry of the Gospel was assuredly appointed by the great author of the Gospel. And without entering into the tangled mazes of controversy, we may surely at least say this, that He who appointed that ordinance, designed by whatever means to perpetuate that ordinance, and that the ministry of the Gospel is of divine appointment. God himself called it into existence; it was the machinery he was pleased to employ to carry on, and to carry forward the kingdom of his Christ. If any men are disposed to find fault with it and say, “Why not let the written Gospel speak for itself? Why not send an angel, or a seraph from the throne of glory with the message; why not let a voice from the throne of God be heard in thunder pealing to the hearts of all his creatures?”—we answer, “Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?” Rather be it ours

to say "Be it so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." No truth in Scripture is more palpable and undeniable than that God did appoint the foolishness of preaching as the great instrumentality under his Gospel. It is the peculiarity of the Christian religion that it is so propagated. The Jewish religion was propagated by ceremonies, and forms, and types, and shadows: these had a voiceless eloquence that spoke to the ear of faith, and was intelligible to the eye and the heart of faith, however indistinct and apparently indefinite was their knowledge. The heathen and false religions have usually propagated themselves by the sword, the fire, and the torture. But it is the pre-eminent peculiarity of the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus, that by the power of persuasion, and the simple appeal of truth to the conscience and the heart, it has its potency and its triumph.

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses, but hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation." "God appointed some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers." "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; and, lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world:" to them and their successors, and their successors' successors, till time shall be no longer, and the whole ransomed people of God be saved to sin no more. Beloved brethren, we may therefore without presumption, take up the language of the Apostle, and say, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ: as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled unto God." Men and brethren, in these days when man is heard too much, the messenger looked upon and the message despised, how much do you need to be reminded, that preaching is an ordinance of God for the saving of your souls. Take heed how ye hear. Ye hear; the voice is human, but the word divine. "He that despiseth us, despiseth our message, despiseth not us but God that sent us"—the King whose ambassadors we are, whose credentials we bear in our hands, and whose commission those credentials so undeniably exhibit.

Then if God appointed it, it cannot be foolish, it must be wise. Omniscience could only devise the best, and infinite grace must have prompted the best, of all machinery. If we rested here, therefore, we might consider this one simple argument enough. But we would advance further, and argue that preaching is likewise excellent, inasmuch as *it is the ministration of the Spirit of God*. Yes, beloved brethren, we are emphatically under the dispensation of the Spirit. All holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, proceed from him; without him we cannot think a good thought, we cannot speak a holy word, we cannot achieve a holy purpose. Without the Spirit of God all is impotency, all is darkness, all is corruption, all is vanity. But how does God communicate his Spirit? Does he send it in visions of the night, or does he send it in impressions—unmeaning, undefined, fanatical, impressions of the day? Does God send his Spirit by the sciences or by the arts that human wisdom teaches us? Does God send his Spirit to his people for the conversion and edification of their souls, by his visitations, by his judgments, by the reading of holy books, even by the reading of his Word? By the former of these instrumentalities never; by the latter we are bold to say rarely, compared with the frequency with which he conveys his Spirit to the soul by the foolishness of preaching. Look in the early history of the church, and see how the mighty results of the Gospel were then achieved; then three thousand were born

in an hour, and five thousand were similarly born in a day. It was when Peter was simply preaching Christ crucified, that they were pricked in the heart and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" We deny not that the preparation of heart which is from the Lord, is frequently the result of his judgments and afflictions, and frequently results from expostulations of friendship, or the private reading of the Word: but we are persuaded that in the great majority of instances, God honours human husbandmen to cast in the incorruptible seed, which springs up in the furrow, the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear, a glorious harvest from above. We are persuaded that the more a man would investigate the subject, the more would he be convinced, that the Spirit of God has in all ages been pleased to communicate himself mainly and most frequently through the foolishness of preaching.

Beloved brethren, the effect and the efficacy of this simple instrumentality at once stands forth in boldest manifestation. It is from God: it is from no innate energy; it is from no power in the Word of God itself; and although it be a sword of heavenly temper and sharpness, a two-edged sword, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;" though it be as a hammer mighty to break the rock in pieces, cannot the feeble arm of a worm of the dust direct that sword or wield that hammer? No, brethren, but there is an Almighty arm, on which the faithful minister rests, which is ever with him, that points the sword wherever the wisdom of Him whose arm wields it is pleased to direct, and brings home the hammer on the flinty heart when he is pleased to breathe into the contrite heart, that he may have mercy on it, and save it.

Here then, brethren, you should even direct your expectation—not to the channel, but to the living waters that flow through the channel into your souls. Here is what men should come to the house of God expecting—not to hear the voice of the ministers, but the "still small voice" of the Spirit that created them, speaking in the chamber of their heart, entering with irresistible power, and coming home with most gracious consolation to their consciences and their spirits, that they may heed his warnings, his consolations, and his instructions.

We argue still further the wisdom and excellence of preaching, inasmuch as the theme at which the Jews stumbled, and which the Greeks esteemed foolishness—a crucified Saviour—is to them that are called "*Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*" Though he appeared in the form of a servant, though he had no form or comeliness that we should desire him, yet there were beams of the latent Deity breaking forth, so that his disciples could testify, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. His humiliation is the sublimest exhibition of his glory—to think that despised wretched man to connect him with the everlasting God. So that we may say without blasphemy, "My God, yet my brother—my brother, yet my God!"

O, the mystery, how great! O, the mystery, how unspeakably great! What infinite effulgence shines in the crucified Saviour when viewed with the eye of faith, and can approach the veil, and discern the present glory!

Yes, and that which the worldly man disputes, and the selfish righteous man stumbles at—the cross of Jesus—is the very subject which angels stoop to look into; it is the very subject that forms the everlasting praises, it is the very



subject that will ever engage the loftiest thoughts, and kindle the most rapturous songs of the blessed. A crucified Saviour! It is the power of God to convince us of sin; it is the power of God to convince us of the inexorableness of his justice, and the immutability of his truth; it is the power of God to make us see the heinousness of the horrible sinfulness of sin; it is the power of God to touch the hard heart, and to awaken the sleeping conscience; it is the power of God to heal the broken heart, and to comfort those that mourn; it is the power of God to give beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; it is the power of God to maintain the life in the heart; and from the first step in the heavenward course to the last, Christ and him crucified is the hope, and the all in all, of them that are taught and called of God. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world." Here is the one simple testimony of every true-born follower of the Lamb, from the first that felt the attraction of his cross, to the last that shall feel its power when time shall be no more.

We may argue the excellency of preaching from *its great and its gracious results*. Go, both in memory and in imagination, to the beginning of the Christian church. Go back to the period when there were gathered together in an upper room at the utmost five hundred persons; and those constituted the whole church of Christ, the whole fold of the redeemed in this lost world. Cast your eye east, west, north, and south—what do you find? Hopeless heathenism—stupid, inveterate, idolatry. The whole world is under the iron sway of the prince of darkness; and his fetters are so forged by iniquity and riveted by transgression, that they seem almost to defy omnipotence itself. But these few followers of the Lamb, in the confidence of their Master's permission, and in the strength of their Master's name, go forth and simply tell their strange and mysterious message, that "God so loved the world as to send his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." They tell the same simple message to the learned philosopher, the bigoted Jew, and the poor grovelling and degraded heathen; and the same blessed results follow. The philosopher lays his pride and his false theories at the foot of the cross; the prejudiced, bigoted Jew receives that Jesus whom he had crucified, and whose blood was shed for him on the cross. The low grovelling idolater, only distanced from the brute by the form he wears and the language he speaks, rises up into the dignity of a new-born creature, brother to Christ, fellow-heir to angels, and the Son of God. These are the glorious triumphs of the cross. If it were merely the temporary influence Christianity wrought in the world, our own country tells at this hour with irresistible demonstration how mighty its energy and influence. Brethren, why are we not on this sacred day, gathered as our forefathers were, under the oak tree's spreading shade, to go through our dark orgies of impiety and blood, and some affectionate mother, or some tender father, bathing their hands in the blood of their own child, to appease the wrath of his sanguinary Deity? Why are we clothed instead of being naked and wandering savages? Why have we the arts, and sciences, and literature, and all that marks out a civilized people? Trace it up in every single stream, you will find them originate in the foolishness of preaching, the preaching of the Gospel brought to our shores, the Gospel in its benign and heavenly light chasing away the dark

shadows of superstition, and bringing us forth into light. This is the one source; these are the external triumphs of Christianity. But they are nothing compared with its internal, its everlasting triumphs. What avails it to redeem time and leave eternity desolate and lost? What avails it to beautify the prison-house and leave the malefactor still fettered and undelivered? But Christianity acts not thus. What multitudes has it made to pass from death to life, from darkness to light, from the bondage of Satan, to the glorious liberty of the Son of God—from the base, grovelling lusts of the flesh, to the communion which the soul enjoys with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, till that soul becomes even on earth the denizen and citizen of heaven, and fitted and framed it at last in the beauty of holiness, and washed in the blood of the Lamb, to receive the harp of sweetness, and the crown of righteousness, and the palm of victory, and the robes of brightness, and the fulness of joy, and the pleasures for evermore that are at the right hand of God. Can we look back and find any thing to parallel the effects of the foolishness of preaching? The most savage nations brought to be civilized; the most covetous and avaricious man brought to a love of liberty; the most malignant and passionate brought to meekness and benevolence; the most drunken and debauched brought to purity and sobriety: O what triumphs has the foolishness of preaching achieved in former ages! But alas! not so now, because she has become shorn of her strength, like the champion of Israel—because she has sometimes hid the cross, and got rid of it, and lost in secular grandeur and pomp her high and spiritual excellences, because her ministers have been traitors, and her sons have forgotten the spirit and rested in the form; because the church has kept out of view the foolishness of preaching, the preaching has been foolishness indeed. So it was in the long dreary night when an unmeaning mass of superstition was substituted for the foolishness of preaching; penances, and genuflections, and a thousand absurd observances, smothered up the Gospel, and blinded the eyes of men. During that night there was no room for the foolishness of preaching: but mark how God vindicated his ordinance and honoured the instrument he had appointed. For what was it shook the papacy to the centre? What was it rolled away the clouds of darkness from the nations of Europe, and brought them back to the liberty of the Gospel? The foolishness of preaching. When the church had departed from the primitive ordinance, Martin Luther and Melancthon went forth, unbefriended and unpatronized men as they were, to war against earth and hell combined: they went forth in the strength of the Holy Ghost; and by the foolishness of preaching, England, and Switzerland, and half the continent of Europe were emancipated from the yoke of bondage.

May I not appeal to yourselves whether the preaching of the crucified Saviour is not foolishness? There may be a decent and orderly attendance on the public ordinances of religion; there may be a certain moral influence exerted—though that is very scanty indeed—on the outward character and conduct of the hearers; but where is the man “pricked to the heart,” and crying, “What shall I do to be saved?” Where is the man that strikes on his breast and says, “God be merciful to me a sinner?” Where is the man who is brought to be devout in heart, and to fear and love God and man? Where is the man breaking off from fellowship with earth to enter into fellowship with heaven? How nerveless is the arm of the ministry unless it hold up the cross! “I, if I

be lifted up, will draw all men unto me," said the Saviour; and there is no minister of Christ, though his mental power may be small, and his physical strength feeble—though his eloquence and his literary attainments are of an humble character—if his heart is full of the love of the Gospel, and his voice pours forth the simple strains of the Gospel—who will not be the joyful father of many children in Christ, whom he shall in the last day lead up to the throne and say, "Father, here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me."

My appeal is also to the hearts of the faithful children of God. How many of you can look back and say, "That sermon first touched my heart that never was touched before—that simple remark which often had occurred to me, but never before struck me." I would appeal to the faith of the Christian. Has not God often spoken a word to you in season, so that it has been as a voice from heaven, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it?" Has not God by the foolishness of preaching, set the captive free? Have you not come here sad and sorrowful, and distressed, and ready to say, "My God hath forgotten, and my God hath forsaken me?" The lips of the minister have at once assured you that He will never leave you, and never forsake you: and you have said, "This was my infirmity." Have you never felt hard thoughts of God, and infidel doubts arising? And you have said "Then went I to the house of God and there understood I the end of the wicked. And I turned me from them to my own folly: so foolish was I, and ignorant."

Men and brethren, I appeal to you practically as evidence that every true Christian knows that God honours preaching. God forbid that we should disparage the secret reading of his word, or any other means of grace; but this we would say, that to put any means in competition with the foolishness of preaching, when it can be enjoyed, is sinful. It is not an ordinance of human wisdom, but of divine appointment.

Then if these things be so—if, on the one hand, preaching appears so foolish, and, on the other, it is so excellent, so wise, and so powerful—let me in the first place, say, Do not fall into the false notion of the day, do not give way to the sentiment which is so prevalent, that *education* is to be the grand regenerator of mankind. God never said "By the foolishness of *education*" it has pleased him to save them that believe. Far be it from the minister of Christ to deprecate education—far from him to wish that his fellow-creatures should not be able to read and write his own language. But to put the handmaid in the place of the mistress, to put the appointment of man in the place of the ordinance of God, is the way to bring a curse and not a blessing on education. Education is the great idol of the day to which the minds of men are continually burning incense; and they set aside the foolishness of preaching for the sake of that dream of their own imagination. Will education ever change the nature of man? Will human education—I am not speaking of religious education—will mere human education ever produce the results which its fond and dreary theorists ascribe to it? It will elevate man: but how? It will elevate him from the beast to approximate him to the fiend. It will make him less grovelling in his pursuits, but it will make him more dangerous to himself and his fellows. Education without religion is like the sheathless sword in the hands of a madman: he may employ it against his foes, but it is more probable he will sheathe it in his own bosom, or in the bosoms of his friends. Be assured of this, that our missionary societies, and our other religious institutions,

will never prosper and have the blessing of God if we expect to bring about the kingdom of God by any other instrument than that which God has appointed. O that we may lay this to heart, and honour God in his own appointed way !

Men and brethren, if these things be so, then how faulty must many of you be when you go to hear the preaching of the word much as the world goes to the theatre ; and you listen to the preacher as a man does to an actor, when you go to hear the words of man instead of the word of God. O that you would hear the word of God by his prophet, and may they sink into your hearts and never be forgotten : “ Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh ; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.” The dew of divine grace often falls on the individual that sits beside you, and yet not a drop of that dew falls on your soul ; and if you continue to trust in man you shall be ‘ like the heath in the desert, and you shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.’ But “ blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green ; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”

My heart's desire and prayer: to God for you, beloved brethren, is, that you may wait on the ministry of my long-loved and cherished friend in the spirit of simple faith in God. The most persuasive and eloquent minister who ever stood up to preach for God would profit you nothing in the matter of the salvation of your souls, save to heighten your responsibility, and deepen your doom, unless you looked, not on his eloquence or his persuasiveness, but on the blessing of God, who alone can give the increase. But the simplest and weakest creature who ever spoke the word of God may save, convince, and sanctify the mightiest mind that ever waited on the truth as it is in Jesus, if the Spirit of God sends home the truth, however faultily delivered, in demonstration and power to the conscience.

If these things be so, how much does it behove the Christians of this country, and especially the members of the church of England, to multiply that machinery which is God's great ordinance, to beautify the people with salvation, and promote that righteousness which exalteth a nation, and destroy that sin which is the shame of any people. Our teeming population and our vast commercial prosperity will hurry us down to the gulf of national anarchy and ruin, unless the church of God arouse herself with all the energy and power which God has imparted to her as his steward in this nation, in order to meet the exigences of the case, and provide a fold where the sheep may be in safety. I thank God that the spiritual overseer of your vast population has felt the importance of this ; and I trust in God that there will go forth amongst you a spirit that will respond to the appeal which he has made ; and that it will be proved that God has not forsaken us, and that our God has not left this highly favoured land.

“ And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified,” through faith that is in Christ Jesus.

THE NECESSITY OF UNION TO SPIRITUAL SUCCESS.

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REV. S. ROBINS, A.M.

ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW, MAY 12, 1836\*.

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"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."—JOHN, xvii. 21.

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THERE is no such proof of affectionate, endearing, disinterested friendship, as that which is exhibited when death is at the door. Through many long years of patient unwearying kindness no opportunity of service may have been overlooked; but still memory doth fondly and gratefully travel back to the moment when the dying benefactor called us to his bedside, and proved to us that we were in his remembrance at the last, and that we had a place in his parting supplications. Even so it was with the Lord Jesus Christ; he knew the death and the sufferings that awaited him: he knew he was to tread alone the wine-press of the Father's wrath; he knew that the crushing burden of the world's sin was to be all bound upon him: and yet when this season of extremest anguish was at hand he did most tenderly recollect his people, and in his far-sighted love he prayed for them, bearing them in his heart before the throne of grace.

And the prayer that Jesus offered for his people was the prayer of infinite wisdom and unbounded affection. He prayed that even as the Father and himself were united, that so his people might be united together. He prayed that they might be fashioned and spiritually shapened after his most glorious model: and as there is no disunion, as there is no dissevering of views, and interests, and purposes among the persons of the Deity, so did Jesus pray that his disciples in all coming time might be bound up closely and compacted together. And while he prayed for his people he prayed for the world; for the union of the one is the conversion of the other. In the ages that succeeded the departure of Jesus from this earth, there was a proof of the efficacy of this prayer. There were wondrous conversions; men were gathered in by thousands unto the Lord Jesus Christ; prejudice, bigotry, and superstition were trampled in the dust; and they were brought, in all humility of heart, and in all earnestness of purpose, to accept the faith that was promulgated among them. And we can trace the cause of this—it was the united result of the prayers of Jesus: his people who were the preachers of the Word were one in heart and mind; they had all things in common—their purposes, their counsels, their hopes, their successes were all in common: and then, and for centuries after, did the church greatly prosper, so that although the arm of earthly power was continually extended to crush, overwhelm, and annihilate, the fai

\* Anniversary Sermon for the London Missionary Society.

tree which had been planted by the hand of God himself sprang up from this small beginning, and cast forth its wide branches and overshadowed the known world.

And then came the time of external prosperity and of internal disunion for they came almost contemporaneously; and for fifteen centuries hath the church been vexed and troubled with afflictions; for fifteen centuries hath the church been in her widowhood, and hath had to sit in the dust of humiliation and lamentation; and in spite of all effort, and all prayer, and all the preaching of the Gospel, and all the machinery of means that are put into operation, the earth is yet full of darkness and of the cruel habitations of men. And we believe that the cause is to be traced to the converse of that which caused its early prosperity—we believe its disunion has caused its unsuccess.

And, beloved, we think that this is a matter exceedingly appropriate to the times in which we live, and very seasonable for the occasion which hath now gathered us together. We believe that that which we have commonly called "the evangelical world" hath gone greatly astray in this matter; that there hath been an oversight of the great principle which the Lord Jesus exhibited to his people—the necessity of union to all spiritual success. There hath been effort; there hath been championship of particular portions of truth; but of truth itself the church has sometimes, in her factious zeal, made almost an entire shipwreck. So that the Gospel which was like universal sunshine for the gladdening of the nations and the blessing of mankind, hath come to be the patronage of a party and the legacy of a few. There hath been enough championship and enough proselytism, and enough bitterness, and more than enough of party spirit; but there hath not been enough of union, and therefore there hath not been enough of success.

Now we do not propose to speak to you at present upon the bearing of this matter upon the character and prospects of the church at large, but we want to narrow the field of our observation, and to bring what we have to say to you more into a point; and therefore will we apply it to the matter which is more especially in hand. And we propose, in the opening of this subject matter to you, to shew in the first place, that disunion among professed Christians hath been the great hinderance of missionary success; and, in the second place, to shew you the result of union in the conversion of the world.

As to the first head, then, of our subject, that this DISUNION HAS BEEN THE MAIN HINDERANCE OF MISSIONARY SUCCESS. Disunion hath its source among the lower and the worse parts of our better nature; and by whatever fair names we may choose to call it, or with whatever fair concealment we may choose to cover it, it is yet in its origin and in its issues altogether hateful, and altogether contrary to the principles of the Gospel; it cometh from man's selfishness, which makes him willing to pay the sacrifice of a large amount of universal good, just for the extending of his own partial and particular benefits—so that provided only he shall establish his plans, plans upon the uprearing of which he hath staked his reputation, it maketh little concernment to him that the cause of his Master is blasphemed, and the extension of his kingdom is hindered. Every man looketh to his own things, and not to the things that belong to Jesus Christ. It hath its origin in pride—the pride which maketh a man desire to get a name for himself, to establish his own reputation by the

championship of a particular plan—pride, that anti-social principle, which is like the principle of repulsion among the particles of matter, preventing their union and their consolidation. This principle is at work in the church of Christ, keeping Christian men apart from each other, and hindering the result which would spring from an united effort. And Satan is ever at work, and he is reaping his rich harvest in the disaster of the church, and the disappointment of the hopes of God's people. He does not come (O no, he is far too wise and far too experienced)—he does not come in all the naked deformity and hideousness of his own aspect, but he ever clothes himself with raiment of light, and he speaks with an angel's voice, and he praiseth our zeal, and deems us to be champions of the truth, and confessors of the faith; and so doth involve us in controversy, until we have destroyed all the Christianity of our spirit, until we have become unfit for the work, to which the Lord by his providence and his grace hath called us—unfit for the work, for nothing doth so unfit for the work of promulgating the Gospel, as disunion among those who have set themselves to the accomplishment of it. There is wasted energy: we do not attempt to affirm so untenable a proposition, as that all professing Christians are locked in deep spiritual slumber. No, they are up and astir; their minds have been awakened: and how could it be otherwise, when all the world is awake, and all men are eagerly and with full energy following their favourite objects? There is energy enough and zeal enough at work, but it hath been turned into a wrong direction, it hath been turned into a wrong channel; and the issues are not those on which the hopes and prayers of God's believing people have been so long fixed.

Not only is energy thus wrongly expended, but men are unfitted for the performance of their work. For let me remind you party views cannot be held as something distinct from personal character. A man cannot be unhurt engaged in controversy. He cannot engage himself in all the keenness of partizanship, and then go home quietly to his own chamber, and pray efficaciously for the spread of missions. He cannot go to his home, and set himself in simplicity of spirit to the furtherance of the great work which he desires to accomplish. You remember the apostle Peter's warning to Onesimus against domestic strife, because it "hindered prayer" in the great family of the church of Christ. Prayer is so hindered because of the factious divisions, because of the feuds, and because of the hot and hasty tempers that are exhibited. Prayer is made inefficacious, and its wings are clipped, and it is earth-bound, and it cannot rise up to bear its sayings to the throne of grace; it cannot go to Him who heareth and who answereth, and who giveth a rich return of blessing.

And if this take place at home, if we are divided among ourselves, each upholding his own partial view; and if we are at home so imbued with the spirit of party, that men will make sacrifices, far mightier sacrifices than we can conceive, for the advancement of it, so that we join heart and hand with those who entertain common views upon that which is contingent and accidental, while at the same time we are divided, the distance of the universe on matters that are necessary and essential—if it be so, we say, that party spirit hath so eaten into the heart's core of our home piety, we cannot marvel if our missionaries should go away with much of party spirit from such an atmosphere as they have been breathing, and that their work abroad should be hindered just in proportion as the preliminary work at home hath been hindered. What

marvel if they should go away from us to fight the battle of church governments, or their own particular modes of worship in regions which are yet lying in the darkness of heathenism, or where Satan yet holds his usurped supremacy? And thus doth it happen that the heathen hath almost always a prejudice against the reception of the Gospel; for the first tidings of Christianity that have reached him have come in connexion with strife and controversy. The heathen know (for let me remind you that many of them are shrewd and keen-witted men)—they know well enough that truth is one; and when they see the divisions of their teachers, by a very inconclusive mode of reasoning indeed, they come to the result that the message is false. And where are we to find a remedy for these things? In nothing short of an union; in nothing short of flinging away from us the party spirit which hath hindered and paralyzed our efforts. And how can this be accomplished? We must pray God that he would advance the spiritual character of every one of us; for union and piety are more closely connected than we at first imagine; nay, we believe that they always stand to each other in the mutual relationship of cause and effect, mutually re-acting, and mutually reproducing. We must pray God to raise us above the low level that we now occupy, and make us breathe a purer and better atmosphere, and make us go away from all the stir and tumult and turmoil of this poor world, and that we live in, and fix our thoughts and our hopes more constantly and more intently upon, the spiritual and immortal world that we are all travelling unto.

And when these things shall have attained unto their due prominence, when we shall have thoughts for God and his glory, and man and his salvation, then there are hopes that we may meet in a consistent uncompromising union. When we shall have fastened our view on that land which lieth far away, on the sunshine of God's ever-smiling face; when we shall have looked over the wide waste of this world's troubled waters to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, advancing slowly, yet steadily on our sin-stricken world, silently and without observation—we cannot, O we cannot, come down from our point of lofty view, to mingle again in things so mean and so unworthy as those which have engaged us. These will have sunken to their puny insignificance, while the others shall have risen to all the majesty and magnificence of their true and real gradation.

And now we go on to consider **THE RESULTS OF CHRISTIAN UNION IN THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD.** The acceptance of the Gospel, with all its consequent and everlasting benefits, is included in the phrase which our Lord employs: "That the world may believe that thou hast sent me." God doth in the one province of his dominion just as he doth in the other province of his dominion—he commonly connects the means with the end. What he doth in providence, that he also doth in grace. Now the appointed means of the conversion of the world is by dissemination of Christian faith, which is included in the phrase, "That the world may believe that thou hast sent me"—that the Father hath sent the Son. It is not a mere assent of the understanding to an undeniable truth, when arguments shall have been so close and concise as to shut us up to a conclusion from which there is no escape; but it is a matter in which the heart also hath had its employment, a matter in which the moral feelings have had as much to do as the mental faculties. The evidence of the



Gospel cannot savingly be received without the interposition of the one just as much as the intervention of the other. To believe that God hath sent his dear Son as the messenger of mercy, of the missionary of love to this lost world, what is this, but to acknowledge our need of a Saviour; what is it but to confess that we wanted one to interpose on our behalf, and to rescue us from all the wretchedness, and ruin, and guiltiness into which our first parents had brought us? So that to believe this great proposition, that the Father hath sent the Son, is nothing else but to receive the tidings of infinite and yearning compassion which never rested, and which never wearied, until the great work of rescuing and restoring had been accomplished.

And then as the moral character of man has to do with the first reception of the Gospel; as it is necessary that not only the evidence should be brought to the door of his understanding, but to make its ingress into his heart, so in the reception of the Gospel he is brought into a new relationship, his own heart becomes changed; he is made a creature of hope: and he that hath hope purifieth himself: hope is the mightiest engine of man's civilization. He will no longer consent to be the drudge of sin, he will no longer consent to live in slavery of the lower and baser parts of his nature. God hath looked upon him. The eye of compassion is on him, and he will no longer be what he once was; but he is elevated, he is advanced, and feels that he stands in a new and inconceivable relationship to his God.

It were a very easy thing for us to exhibit to you the mighty proofs of the preached Gospel in taming men down from their savageness, turning them to civilization, and making them such in their relations and connexions with each other, and such in their personal habits and characters, as we would most desire that man should be made. It would be an easy thing for us to shew you, how they are brought under the protection of equal law, and the securities of home, and the establishment of independent rights; for there is no safe and sound government like that which stands upon the Gospel. And we might shew you how, by the very same means, their homes, and their every-day life are adorned with all the sweet, and kind, and gracious interchanges of courtesy; for the Gospel is the parent of all our best affections, and the sister of all our tenderest charities. It were easy to dilate on this matter, and to tell you how rough hordes of rude men have been reclaimed, and bound up into societies; how the hedge-row hath divided the fields of occupation; how well-ordered villages have risen up and school-houses have been built, and men by the mere operation of the Gospel, in their temporal character and prospects have been brought into a condition, which by no other means they could have attained unto. But this were to take the lowest ground, this were to speak of man only as to the concerns, and the interests, and the relations of time. We have to speak of him as an immortal creature; we have to speak of him as one whose inheritance lieth in that world of faith which is beyond the world of sight; we have to speak of him as one whom God hath mightily ennobled and inconceivably dignified; and whom he hath cause to look at in the new aspect of a redeemed spirit and an heir of immortality. Now the missionaries go forth to tell this new tale of eternal life; to tell those who have been sunk and ground down under the bondage of Satan, that they are heaven's own freemen, and that God so loved them that he would not have them to perish, but sent his own Son to bring them into the arms of his mercy, and the circle

of his complacent kindness. And by no other means could men be reclaimed; by no other means could they be softened and civilized, and made in themselves and to each other what we love to think they may be.

We throw back on the infidel and the worldly the charge of enthusiasm; we think it belongeth to them, and to them solely, for they still hope for results from means whose inadequacy hath been again and again demonstrated. Philosophy hath never accomplished this; legislation hath never accomplished this; schools have never accomplished this: but men must remain in their uncivilization, and all the best and most important parts of their character must remain uncultivated and untilled, if God do not by his own Spirit bring them under the operation of a spiritual husbandry, and make their souls, formed, gifted, and endowed by himself, to be fruitful to his own glory.

Now the means of the world's conversion are not merely the circulation of Bibles: it is not merely that our printing-presses with their thousand hands should deal forth without intermission copies of the word of life; but the servants of the cross must go forth, and from their lips must the word start forth into all its potent energy; it must become *the preached word*, ere it can be efficacious to the conversion of the world. If the Bible be the silent missionary, the missionary must go forth as the speaking Bible. And he goes well furnished for this work. He hath evidence for every form of heathenism with which he has to contend. This was beautifully explained by the returned missionary of the Scottish Church, when he gave to his own assembly an account of his stewardship: he did prove indeed that to the well-furnished and the well-cultivated there was evidence enough, and that the very instruction and enlargement of the mind fitted it to grasp other modes of evidence, and to apply it for the removal of all doubtfulness. But if unfitted it gave to those who had no cultivation, and who could lay claim to no mental strength, while it is just the evidence which we find efficacious among the most untaught of the population of our towns. We can exhibit the necessities of those to whom we speak; turn their looks into their own hearts; and they find traces enough of sin; and they find proofs enough of departure from the great and glorious original. And thus they see that the Bible which interprets these things is the revealed word of God. We shew them also a remedy which the free, full, and unfettered mercy of God hath provided; and that just for their condition of helplessness as well as sin, God hath made a rich and glorious provision: so that they have but to lift the dying eye to Him that hung on the cross, and there cometh back life and health, and they live before their God. And then they feel that this abundant, this perfect provision for all their wants, doth prove that the book which contained it is of God.

But there is yet another class of evidences which we would not that one of our missionaries should go forth unprovided with. When the Gospel hath been preached the missionaries have to exhibit concerning themselves that they have membership with Jesus: they have to exhibit their own brotherly affection one to the other, that all men may know they are the disciples of Jesus. And when their own personal interest in the Gospel hath thus been proved, then their brotherly and affectionate union will serve, as our text affirmeth it will serve, for a proof that the Gospel itself is from God. And we do believe there is absolutely no evidence which shall come home so powerfully and so effectually to the heart of a heathen man, as the sight of such an

union of tenderness, and kindness, and self-denying affection, as they never saw spring from their own gross superstitions. And this, which was something apart from what they had ever known, something more bright and more lovely than they ever had anticipated, would bring before them the reverse of what they had hitherto seen, and convince them that of a truth this message is from the Lord. And so the first Christian teachers, and so the first Christian converts, being bound in union to each other, are presenting a most beautiful exhibition, that the Gospel is of God; are presenting a most irresistible proof to the understanding of the most unenlightened, and the hearts even of the most obdurate, that the God of goodness and grace hath sent this religion unto them. If there be any who feel doubtfulness as to the result of this evidence so presented, then do we intrench ourselves behind the language of our text, shewing it to be the very prayer of Christ, that his people might be one, as he and the Father were one, and that this may be the result, "that the world may know that thou hast sent me."

Now the work on which the missionary effort is to be spent is the mightiest and most magnificent work on which man can ever expend his energies. We do believe that the Gospel is greatly undervalued, that its character is greatly depreciated, when we only vindicate for it those gentler and softer home moralities which fall under our daily observation, and so seem to sweeten and adorn our existence. We do think that a mighty injustice hath been rendered to Christianity, when we assign all of grandeur, all of heroism, all of bravery, and all of daring, unto the worldly and the carnal. We believe that the Gospel hath its heroism, before which all the mightiest exploits of human warriors sink into nothing; we believe that never did the men of renown present to the world such majestic achievements as the soldiers of the cross of Christ, who have gone forth to give battle to an evil world, to fight for their Master, and to plant the standard of his cross, in regions which had been taken under a foreign yoke. They went forth, and their only weapons of offence were the sword of the Spirit, and the only armour for their protection was the shield of faith. O we do think that there never hath been in the world such an exhibition of the principle of duty, of lofty, considerate, self-denial, as when the man, who in sincerity and simplicity of purpose has given himself to the work of evangelizing the heathen, goes forth, knowing his toils and having an anticipation of his perils, yet not shrinking from them. But O it was not at the outset of his work that he had most to endure: it was not even when he was bidding his last farewell to the white-headed father, or to the brother and the sister whose childhood was nursed on the same bosom, and whose youth grew up under the same roof: it was not when he trod the deck of the missionary ship, as it bounded over the waters, and he lost sight of the cliffs of his own fatherland; for there a prosperous wind was in his sail, and he knew he was wafted on his way by the sympathies and the prayers of Christians at home: it was not even when the vessel slept in her shadow becalmed in the vast Pacific, for even then hope was at his heart, and told him there should be years of prosperity, that there should be heathen to be saved, precious and immortal souls given to Jesus; but he landed, and there was no hand to grasp his, and no lips to speak a word of kindness: yet his courage hath not failed him. Years pass by, and he has been disappointed, and he hath had to deal with rough natures which he could not tame, and he hath seen no conversions; and he hath gone

down to his rude tomb. He hath lived, and he hath died, enduring hardness like a good soldier of Jesus Christ: and there cometh a word of warning from the grave of the missionary, and it comes to us, and bids us to be up and astir in this great matter.

O the purpose, and the motive, and the success, are so great, that we do feel if this matter might only be worthily commended to you, that your hearts should leap in your bosoms, and many start forth, and breaking away from all home-ties would give themselves to the work. The wise men would bring in the results of their art and prudence for the counsels of this society, and the rich would pour into its treasury the results of their successful enterprise. But let the cause be commended inadequately and imperfectly as it may, it is the cause of God. It is the cause of God; but if we are asleep, and listless, and unexcited, and unroused, O let us not think that we are safe. That the work is proceeding, that the prayer of Jesus shall be answered, faith will not suffer us to question. But then there will be the searching, overwhelming inquiry, "Where, where were ye, that ye came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty?" There shall come a voice from India, and a voice from Africa, and a voice from the islands of the Southern Sea, a voice from the perishing and the dead, a voice from those who went down to eternal destruction, and we knew that they were dying, and we never went to save them; we knew that they were perishing, and we never put out an arm or a prayer for their rescue. Beloved, we do entreat you that you lay this matter to heart. There shall be a witness against all the careless, and all the indifferent, and all the inactive, amongst us. It is not by sickly sentiment that you can be acted upon; it is not by paying the cheap contingent of fair words to our cause: but there must be active, hard-working, and self-denying love excited, and then should we give ourselves to the work. And because Jesus hath redeemed us, Jesus hath made us his own: and whoever we are, and whatsoever we can do, with all the faculty of the understanding, and all the affections of the heart, with all our property, with all our influence, with all our time, and with all our prayers, we are bound to devote ourselves to this cause.

We hold just the converse of the doctrine of those who think that the conversion of the world is to result from the machinery we put into operation. These are times when business hath been dove-tailed into all our associations, and all orders of our efforts; so that there is peril of men supposing, that the evangelizing the country will be a thing which their money can accomplish. If all treasure is brought unto us; if we might lay hands upon all available resources; if we might enlist all the talent, and all the zeal, and all the patience, of the land, we should not accomplish the conversion of a single soul without the blessing of the Lord Jehovah. Therefore we come back to the point from which we started: there is need of *prayer*, there is need of the *united prayer* of the church of Jesus, that he put forth the power of his own arm, that he manifest his own strength, and that he himself convert the land.

And it seemeth to us as if the crisis of the world were well-nigh come; it seemeth to us as if the shades of evening were falling on its path. It seemeth to us as if the things of time and the affairs of men were falling into their dotage. And sure we are of this, that the super-stitions which have domineered so long, that the forms of false faith which have tyrannized and lorded over men's spirits for so many ages, are now fast crumbling to pieces. We are sure

that Mahommedanism, the great apostacy of the West, shall not long continue—the great apostacy of the East shall not long continue, that it shall crumble and decay. Sure we are that Popery, gigantic though its external developments be, hath its heart's core eaten out.

But do we therefore take comfort from these manifestations of coming things? Heathenism may be dead—and we believe that by the traffic of the merchant, light and knowledge shall be carried to every door; but because the idols shall be broken, and because the altars shall be desecrated and thrown down, do we thereon build the foundation of our hopes? No; we believe that the passing away of Mahommedanism, and Popery, and heathenism, shall, if left to their own working, be just serving as the handmaid of infidelity. Therefore it is for the people of God, those on whom he hath laid the material of all conceivable obligation, to be earnest in prayer, to be earnest in their endeavours, that this antagonist principle may be met, and vanquished, and trampled under foot, and that on the ruins of this world's deities the kingdom of the Lord Jesus may be established in its length and breadth.

Above all, let us pray that our church—*our church*—not a part, or a section, or a fragment—but the whole catholic universal church of the Lord Jesus Christ on the earth, under whatever form of government it be manifested; let us pray that that church be in truth the power of Jehovah, the mother of our hopes, the city set upon a hill; that the church of Jesus Christ in the compactness of its privilege, in the firmness of its consecration, may move on through its long train of prophecy; and being at once the depository and the dissemination of truth, may become the joy of the whole world.

## THE ECLIPSE.

“The sun was eclipsed,” Luke, xxiii. 45.—For the purpose of illustrating a particular truth, which I was anxious to impress on your minds, I adverted, in one of the three Sermons I preached before you on Sunday last, to the eclipse, which astronomers calculated would occur in the course of the present day. You have now at this moment an ocular demonstration of the fact—of the accuracy and fidelity with which astronomical computations are made; the eclipse having commenced and having now ended precisely as had been predicted: and there does appear to me to be a peculiar energy and force, not only in the words which I have selected as the text (“*The sun was darkened or eclipsed,*”) but in others of a like import, which we meet with in different passages of the Scripture. Thus, in Exodus, x. 22, “There was a thick darkness over the land,” and in the book of Job, “They meet with darkness in the day-time;” and in the Psalmist, “He sent darkness, and made it dark.” And again we read these emphatic words in Ezekiel, xxvii. 8, “I will send darkness upon the land saith the Lord.”

Now without dwelling on the occasion upon which these and similar declarations were made, or explaining the force and meaning they bear, I will avail myself of the present opportunity to offer a few remarks upon the eclipse and the supernatural darkness with which the land was overspread on the crucifixion-day of our blessed Lord. The present natural occurrence of an ordinary eclipse has suggested to me, that such remarks would neither be inopportune nor without some portion of benefit, not only to the inquiring, but to the unenlightened mind of man.

In the twenty-seventh chapter of St. Matthew, occurs the following singular record; “Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.” I need scarcely tell you that the occasion upon which this extraordinary alteration in the face of nature, or darkness of three hour’s duration, took place, was at the time in which our Saviour was hanging and expiring on the cross. Now the first inquiry in my mind, in meditating on this passage, has always been, not as to the fact itself, of this darkness, of which there can be no doubt, but as to its being a natural or preternatural occurrence. If the former, it would have been a most singular coincidence indeed, that an eclipse should have taken place just at the very moment in which the whole of nature was undergoing the most extraordinary travail to which it has ever been subjected; I mean, the expiring and crucifixion of nature’s God!

But I am disposed to think that the whole appearance was supernatural, or not in the ordinary course of periodical solar eclipses, but that, to use the words in the prophet Ezekiel, it was the act of the Most High God: “I, saith the Lord, did set this darkness upon the land.” And the reasons upon which I ground my opinion, are the following. The day on which our Lord was crucified was the *fifteenth* day of the month, and it was full moon: consequently, the moon must at that time have been in opposition to the sun, the earth being intercepted; and the inference, therefore, is, that there could not have been any natural or ordinary eclipse of the sun, as on this afternoon, at the period of which we are speaking—*viz.* the three hours’ darkness upon all the land. No eclipse can ever take place, except at or about the time in

which the moon is undergoing one of its periodical changes: no eclipse can ever happen when it is full moon. And besides, the very longest period of time the obscurity or darkness continues, during an eclipse of the sun, does not exceed a few minutes at the utmost. The sun is partially under an eclipse at this moment, and not much more than an hour has elapsed, since it passed its greatest period of obscuration, which did not last, according to my own computation more than three or four minutes. Its greatest obscuration appeared about a quarter before three o'clock\*.

Perhaps it will not be here uninteresting to explain to you briefly, and as intelligibly as possible, how eclipses are occasioned. An eclipse of the sun can only happen in conjunction, *i.e.* when the moon coming between the earth and the sun, intercepts his rays or light. An eclipse of the moon is occasioned by the intervention of the earth, between the sun and moon in opposition. As our planet, the earth, is opaque, or dark, and nearly spherical, it throws a conical shadow on the side of the moon opposite to the sun, the axis of which passes through the centers of the sun and earth. An eclipse of the sun, then, takes place when its rays are intercepted by the moon; and the reason why the diameter of the moon appears to differ so little from the diameter of the sun, is that, though immeasurably smaller, it is infinitely nearer to the earth. The distance of the sun from the earth is ninety-five millions of miles, while that of the moon, is only about two hundred and thirty seven thousand miles. Were the eye of a spectator in the same straight line with the centers of the sun and moon, he would see the sun eclipsed. If the apparent diameter of the moon exceeded that of the sun, the eclipse would be total. Were it less, the observer would see a ring of light round the disc of the moon, and the eclipse would be annular, so called from the Latin word *annulus*, a ring. And this is the character of this day's eclipse. It is termed an annular eclipse from the circumstance of something like a ring of light appearing round the moon's disc. The planet we inhabit is very properly termed an orb, for the lunar eclipses prove the fact of the earth being round, and this also explains the reason why eclipses of the sun are seen by the inhabitants of one, and not by those of another country, the apparent distances of the centers of the sun and moon being periodically augmented or diminished.

But not to dwell further on explanations, on a subject of all others calculated to elevate and expand the mind's views of the works of nature's God, and not without their interest even to the most unenlightened of the species, I observe, in reference to the more immediate topic which has elicited them, that every thing concurs in imparting strength to the inference I have drawn, *viz.*, that the darkness at the crucifixion was supernatural; and the period during which it lasted was so miraculous as to repel the idea of any ordinary solar eclipse; for it is proved, by the best astronomical authorities that no ordinary eclipse at any time has continued for a longer duration than *two* hours: and it may further be remarked, that Christ's crucifixion took place on the days on which the passover was eaten by the Jews, on which day it was impossible that the moon's shadow could fall on the earth, since the Jews uniformly kept the passover at the time of full moon: nor does the darkness in total eclipses of

\* According to my sun-dial, the eclipse began at eighteen minutes after one; at that time the thermometer was at 108, and as the shadow increased, it fell to about 82

the sun last above *four* minutes in any place, whereas the darkness at the crucifixion continued for full three hours, and overspread all the land of Judea.

In corroboration of the above statement, the accuracy of which cannot, I think, be shaken, it may be observed, that the greatest eclipse of the sun that can happen at any time, and in any place, the total darkness lasts no longer than while the moon is going one minute thirty-eight seconds from the sun in her orbit ; which is about three minutes and thirty seconds of an hour.

With respect to this supernatural exhibition of darkness at the crucifixion, it may be mentioned rather as a matter of curiosity, than as a subject of importance, that Judea does not appear to have been the only country to which it was confined ; but that other parts of the globe felt the influence of this astonishing alteration in the face of nature of three hours ; and as the whole world was interested in the tragedy enacted in Judea on the crucifixion day, so I think it not improbable to infer, were there even no authority to sanction the conclusion, that it would be a darkness, *even to be felt*, by the inhabitants of all other lands. The silence of ancient authors is no argument against the universal diffusion or prevalence of this supernatural darkness ; for it must be borne in mind, that but very few of the works of ancient authors have been transmitted down to us—that many of those we possess are in an imperfect state, and that, perhaps, there was no author at the time existing, whose subject led him to advert to so singular a phenomenon. The only authors, by whom the phenomenon was most likely to have been noticed, are Tacitus and Pliny, and Suetonius, who were cotemporaneous historians of passing events at the period at which it occurred. In the grave, historical work of Tacitus, and in the elegant familiar epistles of the accomplished Pliny, such a preternatural occurrence might have been adverted to. But it may have been, that what was so universally known, was thought to need no particular record or notice : and as they had few or no data upon which they could find any philosophical reflections on the doctrine of eclipses, all reference might have been studiously avoided ; for astronomy was then a science but little cultivated, and its principles but little understood. Be the fact however as it may, we are not left entirely to conjecture ; for Suidas, *in verbo* Διοϋσίου, informs us, that Dionysius, when he was at Heliopolis, in Egypt, noticed the wonderful phenomenon, and at the time exclaimed, “ *Either God himself is now suffering, or sympathizing with him that does suffer.*” And Phlegon, an ancient astronomer, takes notice of this phenomenon, and describes it as having occurred in the nineteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, which is the very year in which Christ was crucified. His words are these : “ *The greatest eclipse of the sun that ever was known happened then ; for the day was so turned into night that the stars in the heavens were seen.*” The astronomer was inaccurate in describing the extraordinary darkness that prevailed as a *solar eclipse* ; but it is quite clear from his statement, which on this account is highly valuable, that it was not confined to the land of Judea, but that it was spread over other countries and, in short, that the darkness was universal. I will now consider the religious use to be made of this topic, and from the sun being darkened then, to direct your views to that other more awful and more terrific period in which the sun shall be darkened.—REV. J. RUDGE, D.D.



## THE INVESTIGATION OF ANGELS JUSTIFIED

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REV. R. W. HAMILTON,  
FINSBURY CHAPEL, MAY 8, 1836.

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"Which things the angels desire to look into."—1 PETER, i. 12.

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WHAT cause, my brethren, has been loaded with such unsparing contempt and derision as that of Christianity? What cause has been pursued with such cruel and unrelenting opposition? The archers have sorely grieved it, and shot at it, and hated it; and first envenoming their arrows, now they have drawn them to the very hilt, and sent them in thick flight against the detested object. With malignity sufficiently collected to plot, and sufficiently fierce to execute, with rancour enough itself, now for avowal and then for disguise, all nations have compassed it about. Long since, earth would have rejected and spurned it from its surface; it would have rooted it out for ever. The cause of Him who was cradled with oxen, and who was crucified with malefactors—the cause of Him who sprung from obscurity, who lived in poverty, and who expired in infamy—the cause of Him who drew his first breath in a stable, and breathed his latest upon a cross, the prey of reproach, the mark of disdain, the victim alternately of dark conspiracy and popular vengeance—such a cause and such a personage was not only likely to offend an untoward generation and a gainsaying people, but to shake the prepossessions, and to violate the sympathies of man, through all his varieties and through all his times.

Christianity anticipated this, and reckoned upon it: but while it predicted and defined the issue, at the same time it always declared the conduct of its antagonists to be most unwarranted and undeserved. It lights up with indignation against their uncalled for assaults; it denounces and it brands their treason to its worth, and the ingratitude with which they reject its mercy. It will never descend to suffer its enemies to compromise it, and never will it stoop to extenuate itself. Concession and apology it has none: it will be wholly received, if received at all. It will grasp all its claims; it will support the utmost ground of its pretensions. An adoring admiration does it demand, and they who are not prepared to yield it, may save themselves the thanklessness of insulting it with an inferior homage.

But what has it at best achieved? How poor a welcome it could ever boast; how narrow a welcome it could ever demonstrate; how feeble an evidence it could ever signalize and record! Stands it, however, covered with unexpected scorn? Does the opprobrium which rests upon it here, express the emotion of other worlds than our own, of other beings than ourselves? May we not lift it above this region of partiality and prejudice, and challenge for it a

verdict at the bar of the universe? Can any appeal be more just, can any course be more befitting? Is not this the most rational process by which we may attain to a sound conclusion? Whatever we may think, and however we may decide, Christianity is surely exonerated from all charges of insignificance, all suspicion of meanness, when we collect and when we compare the sentiments entertained towards it by other natures who have penetrated far more searchingly, and who can examine far more impartially, than we may even affect to do. They, of whom we speak, those superior intelligences, cannot be bigots, however resolute their attachment; they cannot be dupes, however ardent their rapture; they cannot be maniacs, however uninterrupted their study: they must possess their souls; they must put forth the full mastery of their powers. O, yes; and Christianity is redeemed in a moment from all the low associations with which it has been debased; at once is it vindicated from all the vile misrepresentations that have been cast upon it. At least it cannot be wholly ignoble, and poor, and mean: it is, at least, somewhat restored and retrieved. Burnished are some of its stones, cleansed of some of its imputations, when it is taken up as a theme for the musing, and as a burden for song, by the principalities and the powers in heavenly places. The things which to our natural man are accounted foolishness, command an attention in heaven, which no other subject equally obtains, and *angels*, with their quick discernment, and their lofty faculties, "*desire to look into these things.*"

Let us ascend, as it were, a platform, far removed from the din of earth, elevated above the inveterate enmities of the human heart, whence we may explore other fields of creation, whence we may learn the sentiments, and the impressions, and the tastes, which are indulged by higher orders of existence; dive into angels' bosoms, and see what is here disesteemed and is here reviled, is the wonder, the charm, and the ecstasy of the celestial scene. And if heaven be allowed to arbitrate, there will be no further dispute. We know how heaven is affected towards these things, how it is enamoured of them, how it is transported with them, how it is carried away by them. We, therefore, apply to these themes another standard of thinking, and another scale of intelligence, than may be common among ourselves, than those of which we ourselves can be capable. We have fragments of its conversations, we have strains of its worship, we have outlines of its study. Of what does heaven *converse*? There was a Saviour surrounded by his disciples, by the legates of heaven, and they spake of the decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. There are *strains of worship*; but to what do those strains constantly refer? The Lamb which was slain, and the blood with which the nations were redeemed unto God. What are the *studies* and the *researches* of heaven? Here we have a clue which we cannot mistake:—into these "*things angels*" (there is no definite article in the original)—angels, that is, angels in all their companies, whatever may be the gradations of their hierarchy, whatever may be their thrones, dominions, and powers: angels, however high they can pitch their flight; angels, however melodiously they can roll their song—into these things angels, with all their bands and all their dominations, "*desire to look.*" They give it no vacant glance, no superficial consideration; they assume no listless attitude; they bend and stoop; bending and stooping they *pry* into these things. How should we be confounded with shame, how should we be stung into emulation, when *angels*, who possess not the interest which we may claim

in these things, regard them in a manner so far more impassioned as well as acute!

The text is the consummating point, the crown of a climax. "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." The great themes of all revelation are "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." We must recollect, that in "*the sufferings of Christ*," there was an immediate divine agency. "*It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief:*" but "*as the Lord liveth, he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked;*" and he doth not please himself when he afflicteth and grieveth the children of men. But in this instance, he was *pleased* to bruise, and to put his Son, and his anointed one, to grief. We can conceive of a pleasure which the Deity may have in the punishment of sin, inasmuch as sin is the most abhorrent evil to him; inasmuch as there is a connexion always between the commission of sin and the endurance of suffering; inasmuch as there is a fitness in it in order to warn and to deter the universe. But the Saviour, there was no guile in him; there could be no charge save of our imputed guilt, and our transferred punishment. Therefore, when there is an immediate divine agency in the infliction of his sufferings, we learn, that those sufferings must be peculiar in their effect, that they partake of an atonement.

And *glory* followed on these sufferings—glory that was most peculiar in his resurrection and his ascension, in the unfolding of peculiar personal excellence in the discharge of all his mediatorial offices; by the gifts of his Holy Spirit, by his second advent, and between that advent, the progress and wide-spread triumph of his cause. Then shall be his glorious appearing; then shall he be admired in all them who believe; then shall the wonders of his redemption, no longer seeking the stage of earth to exhibit them, demand for their spectacle and their evolution the theatre of heaven!

Now these are the themes, the mysterious and the unrivalled themes of revelation. And they were depicted by emblem, and they were announced by prophecy. Depicted by emblem; for we are told, that there were those who ministered unto these things in the typical observances. There was a divine afflatus given to the holy seers, through which they roamed into the vista of ages, and saw these great and wondrous events. We find that these sufferings and this glory are inseparably combined, and that the one is in the way to the other, as in the way of means to an end, or in the way of cause to its effect. These sufferings and this glory are not only so depicted, so announced, and so inseparably combined together, but they subserved a purpose during their immediate action. No type was portrayed without a purpose, and no prophecy was announced without a use, even for that given time, and as they passed on to future generations: and thus these prophets and these celebrants learnt what was to take place, and learnt why they were to take place. They saw not as we see; but at the same time they knew they ministered not unto themselves, but unto us; that that type and this prediction were not to ter-

minate upon themselves, but they saw a great and glorious catastrophe in the future.

But how can it be said, that the Spirit of Christ was that Spirit which informed each type and which inspired each prediction? There is no prerogative more solemnly and exclusively asserted by Jehovah than this, that his Spirit was in the prophets. The meanest inference we, therefore, could take, would be the pre-existence of Christ: but we superinduce upon that influence a still wider demonstration, which is the deity of Christ; for it must be within the sole power and prerogative of the Deity so to authorize any observance, and so to inspire any prediction. Well, the Spirit of Christ did all this, and did all this in those who ministered and in those who prophesied. We cannot, therefore, ask other witness, any thing more cogent, more irrefragable than this—the Spirit of Christ is the testimony of prophecy; the Spirit of Christ is the Author of prophecy, and the Author of that prophecy can only be God, through whose energy holy men spake of old, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

But now we see not only prophets, but we see more exalted natures. There is a scale projected from earth to heaven: at its base there are prophets seen, and there are celebrants seen, ministering to these things, and making a heraldry of these things. But, then, upon the summit of this scale there are angels hovering: they themselves wonder at those things, though they occupy a summit concerning which prophets ruminated at the base. We, therefore, have not only to vindicate the grandeur of our system by the conduct and by the inquiry of prophets, raised as they were by office so much above ourselves, but we have to learn from angels, raised so much above prophets, what this Gospel is, how it can justify even their keenest thoughts, and how it can absorb even their most delightful studies. We must attempt to justify their investigation of these things. Into these things—the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which was to follow—angels, all angels, whatever may be their rank and their honour, “desire to look.”

First: *these things involve the most awful order of means.*

It would have been immediately understood, even from the earliest intimation, that man was an object of favour and of commiseration. The promise might be allegorical; rather it was a threatening against the tempter, than a promise to his dupe; but it contained something, it even breathed much: and these natures, of such piercing power and acuteness, could not have listened to that intimation, and could not have pursued it in its bearings and in its influence, without the impression, that man, though fallen, was to be redeemed, and that whatever was his loss, that loss was to be repaired. For man had sinned, and the cool of the day had not reached its perfect chill, nor the shadow of the evening fallen into its thickest night, when there was an embodiment of compassion seen moving in the garden, and there was a voice, not only of rebuke, but of persuasive and touching goodness heard amidst the arbours of that garden; and the sun of the day of our transgression went not down upon the unmitigated and the immitigable wrath of God.

But could it occur to these existences, that nothing should be allowed to obstruct the course of mercy; that whatever should be the demand of equity, there should be compliance with the demand; that whatever should be the right of purity, there should be a satisfaction of the right; that nothing should

be spared, and that nothing should be refused that was wanted to found a system of mercy, as honourable to God as it was efficient for man? What would have been their scrutiny had they been so informed, and what would have been their suspicion in reference to the means that were indispensably required? And yet, had they very soon to discover, placed before them, enigmas, and then predictions, all fraught with this assurance. Nothing is difficult, nothing is impossible; for the God of heaven is the God of salvation, and he will do whatsoever he shall please.

And what was that order of means which they soon beheld disclosed to them? Incarnation—substitution—an atoning, sacrificial death. There came forth a mysterious One; they saw the supernal height from which he bent his steps: they saw him pass their nature, their rank, and become a little lower than the angels—from the bosom of the Father, from the form of God, seeking their aid, accepting their ministrations. They saw that spotless and that holy one made sin, becoming a curse, placed in a new relationship; a relationship which, while it did not sacrifice divine complacency and personal excellence, was a relationship that attracted and conducted punishment down upon itself. And he who occupied that relation had to bear all the effect of such sin, and all the fierceness of such curse. And there was no relinquishment, and there was no extenuation; the evil was all discharged, and the blow was all inflicted, and the victim with the wood of the offering, and the victim bound upon that offering, and that offering enkindled—lightning, at once the tokens of the divine wrath, and the signal of the divine acceptance—lightning kindling that suffering, sin there losing all its desert, wrath there spending all its indignation, and the victim unbound, unconsumed, though his had been a bloody death, and he had presented a perfect oblation, takes at once his place at the headship of the universe, and in all things has the pre-eminence. Well might they wonder, when there were so many notes of preparation, so many preludes introducing Him, this mysterious one, this holy one, this one who was destined to suffer and to die. “He cometh, he cometh!” resounded along the march of type and prophecy: “He cometh, he cometh!” echoed from one end of the heavens to the other. Is he dressed in ensigns and equipped for conquests? Does he spread around him the signals of panic and alarm? Does he wield the munitions of war, and the thunder-bolts of vengeance? He cometh, he cometh, to hear the needy, when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He cometh to relieve the bosom of the conflict, which has ruthlessly lacerated it. He cometh to wipe away the tear so long suffered to fall and to inflame. He cometh to revive the weary, to console the mourners, to bind up the bruised spirit, to lay at rest the heaving and the broken heart: and, therefore, hung he upon woman’s breast, and drunk its balm; therefore, he surrounded himself with all the charities of our most cherished existence; therefore, he became acquainted with grief, learned to weep, cast back the vital air in sighs, consorted with the sons and daughters of affliction, penetrated into the solitudes of abandonment and of anguish, sounded all the depths of misery of which our nature is susceptible, lifted up the wretch when he was spurned by all besides, and the bruised reed he would not break, and the smoking flax he would not quench. Thus did he come—thus did he tabernacle in this building—thus did he dwell in flesh among us; and it was for the sacrifice of death. Such an order of means is a most awful sublimity; and as

wonder that angels, in the spirit of the most perfect scrutiny, "desire to look into these things."

Secondly: *these things effectuate the most stupendous results in the creatures whom they concern.*

There is evidently an incrustation of evil, if we may so speak, covering the face of the earth, the very nature of man. For we find, that man is labouring under relative evils, as well as those which are inherent. His very position is most fatally unhappy. He is a guilty creature, and is obnoxious to the divine displeasure. He is not only a guilty creature, but he is a captive, one brought under the dominance of another power, as well as being the servant of his own lusts and pleasures. He is so alienated, and, therefore, he is deeply revolted from God, and is suffering all the alienation of such a reproach. But these things, the sufferings of Christ, confirmed as they are by the glory which has followed—these things take away, so to speak, all that is external, breaks through this incrustation of evil, alters the relative position in which our being is found; and there is pardon beneath this guilt, there is redemption and rescue from this vassalage, there is permission to draw nigh, there is boldness of access to God, as our reconciling and adopting parent.

Now, surely, when angels have seen in other cases which have interested them, all the severities of justice, the dark and unblenching procedure of that justice, through all its issues, and through all its consequences, they must stand surprised and delighted; surprised to see that that brand of guilt is removed, that that feature of bondage is broken, that the interval is filled, and that there is no yawning abyss; and delighted that the creature who was cut off, and, as it seemed, inseparably and hopelessly from God, is now permitted to come as to a father's bosom, and to catch a father's smile: the Spirit of adoption is moving within him: there is no condemnation, who shall separate from the love of Christ?

But these higher existences see springing up, as the very result of these things into which they desire to look, a new class of results: there is a willing obedience. All that indisposition and untowardness is overcome; all that enmity which flowed from the eye, and blasphemed in the lip, is slain. They are no longer foreigners—they are children; no longer convicts working in chains, but those who rejoice in the splendour of their Potentate, their King: and all this would be inexplicable to them, but that they see there is a connexion between these things and these consequences. O! it was delightful to them when first the tear stood in the rebel's eye, and there were his wringing hands, and there was his palpitating bosom, and there was his bursting heart. O! it was delightful to them when they heard the very notes of heaven—"I have seen it; I have seen it: behold! he prayeth." How would they then rejoice in all the strains of joy, and in all their revolutions of happiness: "Man, an abandoned creature, secured, made fast to his happiness by that very principle and nature of obedience, a new creature in Christ Jesus." And if they wondered to see that the different causes of physical nature, first spoken into being, produced their corresponding effects, and rejoiced together, and sung aloud for joy, much more has this newly-created world, sprung up under the divine hand, and under the plastic influence of these very motives, the operation of these very causes, these very things into which the angels desire to look. They, long before ourselves, felt the sweet wonders of the cross; they, long

before ourselves, knew that He who was lifted up on the cross would draw, by the gentlest and yet the most potent attraction, all men unto him. And if we, in our fallen nature, have been enabled to say, "God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ—we are determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ, even the crucified one," much more has the Spirit taken possession of their bosoms; much more does this tone prevail in their spirits. They will know of nothing else, they can listen to nothing else; here they are fully engrossed. They are not indifferent to nature and its treasures; they are not indifferent to the machinery of providence, and all its dizzy, eternally revolving wheels: but still, by the law of a preference, by the power of a bias, they turn from that creation as if it had become suddenly dimmed, and from that providence, as though it had become weary and uninteresting, reduced to this scale, tried by this test: and they "look into these things."

Thirdly: we justify their investigation, when we reflect that the angels desire to look into these things, *because these things have characterized all the movements of religious dispensations.*

Their nature, doubtless, is that which renders them apt students of whatever is revealed; but then they can only learn according to the allowance of light, and the measures of information which are around them. There may be a most rapid susceptibility of knowledge, but there cannot be its intuition: when they are brought within the divine light and vision, they are charged with folly. It is impossible to conceive that now they have reached the very acmé of that which they shall behold, or grasped the extent of that which they shall compare: for progression belongs to life, to created nature; but that created nature is intelligent, accountable, and immortal. There is a restriction on the inferior tribes of the world; they do not make progression in themselves: the ancestor knew as much, and accomplished as much, as the descendant: there is no transmission of the knowledge—there can be no improvement of the species. But it is different with all intelligent nature; and if you could ever say to an intelligent and accountable creature, "Here is the pause, here is the resting-place; beyond this no more knowledge can be acquired, no more happiness can be enjoyed:" that creature would be seized with anguish; that creature would feel all the pangs of desire: whatever its knowledge, it would feel there was much more from which it was necessarily debarred; whatever its happiness, that happiness never more could be augmented or refined. There would be a change in heaven itself, if angels saw there was not another height for them to soar, that there was not another race for them to run.

But this revelation which was made to them must be the revelation which God had dispensed to us; and we may imagine, that in this building (to use the apostolic phrase) they particularly conued their lesson and pursued their research. They learn as God reveals to them: every new economy and dispensation is the nubosoming of a new purpose, or the unveiling a new feature. And often had they, doubtless, been embarrassed and perplexed: there was only a dark saying muttered from the heart; there was only a curious riddle and device which they could not divine: there was a mystery hidden from the world; but redemption was the most conspicuous of all the glories, and the spirit of all: and we are, therefore, informed, that the book is written on "every side;" it is not written only at the back, or on the cover; the scroll is illuminated, it is embellished with all the letters of divine redemption

And that book is now open, its seals are now broken, its contents are now divulged: and as there has been cautious progress, as there has been irregular revolution, now these things have been made more apparent and explicit to them. But still, there is something they have not been able to comprehend, something they have not been able to learn; and they "desire to look into these things." All economies and dispensations, all figures, all types, all promises, all predictions, all institutions, all services, were but the rudiments which they must study, were but the tasks which they must perform: and thus their knowledge has risen to its present height, and thus their minds have been filled with this heavenly vision; and *now* they still "desire to look into these things;" the charm is not faded, and the relish is not dulled.

Fourthly, these things they desire to look into *as they contrast and oppose themselves more forcibly to those events which the angels will naturally best remember, and in which they take their most natural interest.*

In the history of this world they had often perceived, that no sooner had sin been perpetrated, than punishment was enforced. They have frequently been assessors of such judgment, executioners of such sentences. They barred the garden against our race. They saw, and forewarned a few of the favoured, of the coming storm, when fire and brimstone was rained from the Lord out of heaven on the cities of the plain. Doubtless their agency might have been introduced when the world was swept with universal deluge. By their hand a mighty army is blasted and withered into instantaneous death. And a thousand recollections will rush on your minds that they have been so commissioned and invested, raised up by God to punish sinners, and to set the seal of eternal detestation upon sin.

But yet, in their perusal of our history, and their view of our race, they will mark something that cannot fail to affect them, and equally to astonish them. They must sing of judgment, but they must also sing of accompanying mercy. They must behold severity, but they must, with that severity, behold the goodness of God. Every thing argues, even in the case of those who are most wicked, that the vengeance of heaven does not always burn. There is always a suspense, there is always a restriction, as though the Divine Being stayed himself in his wrath. There is always something of kindness and something of mitigation, where his judgments are confessedly the most sweeping, the most unreserved. But see how much must recur to them. All that they had ever seen or known would have even demonstrated the impossibility of such an arrest upon vengeance, of even a momentary delay; for nothing that they had ever heard or contemplated was at all on the side of such delay, but proved, that if vengeance was awakened, vengeance would fall. "There was war in heaven:" you mark the vacant throne. "There was war in heaven:" where is Satan and his confederate crew? "There was war in heaven:" the solitude is marked, and there was no place found for them. But they might well further have argued, that there was no tendency in the course of human history to a different result. Every bias was in favour of punishment, of unarrested punishment, and undelayed vengeance. Every tendency and every bias looked one way, and operated according to one law. And then the archives of heaven they need not to explore: precedent there was—perhaps but a precedent—but that precedent how applicable, how pointed! Who can turn it aside? Wherein could consist its character, if this precedent was not now preserved?



My hearers, you may now understand why angels "look into these things." There is every thing opposed to, and contrasted with, that which they had known, with that which they could have expected. Take two such passages as these, put them together, and then say, how different the conduct of God to fallen angels, and the conduct of God to fallen man! "He spared not the angels that sinned, but"—(see how sudden, see how undelayed)—"but cast them down to hell;" "He spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all." Here is the great line, and heaven has marked it. Who shall assign the cause, or resolve the reason? He doth as it pleaseth him in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. Well may we say, what angels have long since felt, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his determinations, and his ways past finding out!"

Angels desire to look into these things, *because these things present the most perfect display of the infinite excellency.*

To know God, and always to see his face, and always to stand in his presence, are their delight: this is their fountain of life, this is their source of joy—to know the Divine Being, to serve him, and to resemble him. And, therefore, that which speaks of the Divine Being most intelligibly and the most comprehensively, is the spectacle to which they are naturally attracted, and in which they most perfectly delight. Now, we deny not that there must be in all the furniture and apparatus of nature, that there must be in all the course and eventuation of Divine Providence, much that marks the divine nature and supports the divine claim. But where shall we look? There is an instinctive reply, Where shall we look for the glory of God as in a glass? Where shall we look for God, the whole Godhead as in Christ, when God reconciled the world unto himself? Where is there a view of the divine perfections so detailed, so combined, so energetic, so efficient? Where is there a display of the divine excellency so perfect that we cannot distinguish where the one commences or where the other terminates? There is no abrupt edge, there is no sudden line: it is as the effulgence of colourlessness, the natural tint of undecomposed sun-light, where all is seen, and all is equally seen, and all is fully seen; and mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace embrace each other. You will never find the divine perfections antagonized; and to speak of there being harmony produced between the perfections of the Deity is false, for there never could have been discord. But it is in the light and blessing of redemption, that especially we see how all these perfections, without possible conceivable rivalry, are placed as in the same point, and combined as in the same centre; why justice can say in the very language of mercy, "Deliver them from going down into the pit;" and mercy can say in the very tone of justice, "Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God!" Where are the perfections of the Lord our God seen as in the cross of Calvary? *Wisdom*, there thou dost shine with thy perfected plan, with thy consummated scheme, and thy defeat of every other! *Justice*, there amidst all wrong and outrage, thou dost acquire each right, and dost resent each injury! *Holiness*, there dost thou pour forth the splendour of thy full orb-countenance, where the sun retired into its portentous and unnatural eclipse! *Truth*, there dost thou stand while earth is rocking to its centre, unbending and unmoved! *Mercy*, there dost thou prevail with softest beauty, and smile with mildest grace, where

heaven most darkly lowered, and earth most fiercely rioted, and hell most victoriously reigned! And they "desire to look into these things."

There is another thought to which I only just advert—they desire to look into these things, *forasmuch as these things affect the divine justice, and open a scope for their own benevolence.*

Whatever their piety, and whatever their philanthropy, they are thus conciliated and thus delighted. Their piety, you perceive, must regard the divine character and government. You must conceive of the divine character and government, not as just from any arbitrary arrangement, or any particular purpose and will. It is the necessity of the infinity of perfection that God should be just; for even human creatures almost always place justice as the first of cardinal virtues; and the orator of antiquity says, "*Domina et regina virtutis*"—the mistress and the queen of all the virtues. Now in their piety, or whatever brings them near to God, near in contact, and near in sympathy and taste—O, how is the Divine Being vindicated! How must they have loved him more than they could otherwise have loved, as he is seen more clearly than he could otherwise be seen!

But especially is there a field given for the expatiation of their benevolence. Hitherto there had been a barrier and a restriction, and how could they exercise their charity to men? Behold and admire! They receive the announcement that the guilty is taking one step in his return to God, that there is one movement of his heart towards penitence and contrition: there is joy in the presence of these angels; there is acclamation, festivity, and jubilee. Every eye glistens, every palm waves: the river of life flows with a stronger current, and the tree of life abounds with still more luxuriant fruit. It is new life; their joy is full, their joy overflows. It is something that exceeds all that they have known; it is glory eclipsing glory; it is heaven upon heaven.

They desire to look into these things *as these things may affect their own interest and their own well-being.*

There seems in the dim twilight of a partial revelation, a great probability that they owe their very stability as the elect angels to some connexion of their destiny with the scheme of the cross. There is but a gleaming of the subject; we have but to feel our way and pursue our darkened course. But when we are told they are gathered together in Christ, one with us in Christ, they raise the presumption that they are not without a partial benefit, and that their well-being is in some degree promoted by them, and that even as debtors to these things they may desire to look into them. But how much must their well-being be promoted, when it is remembered that these things most assuredly supply them with new faculties of intercourse with Deity. For now that the glory of that form of Deity is diffused through the Mediator, and all that blaze is softened and attempered, is it possible that it can only be adapted to mortal eye, and not be equally so to angelic gaze; so that God is more known, and their intercourse with him more unembarrassed? Consider what a new companionship has been raised up to them, out of every nation, kindred, tongue and people, under heaven. Now these are wound round their natures, and they feel themselves more identified with God and one with themselves. Their heaven, too, has become far brighter, for it is the heaven in which the incarnate Deity unveils his glory; it is the heaven where the language of redemption for ever reverberates, and we come to an innumerable company of angels,

and those angels made subject to the Son of man: and we may all feel that we are raised above the angels themselves; and while *they* desire to look into these things *we* are more absolutely partaking of the benefit itself, and our song is, "We were redeemed by thy blood—Worthy is the Lamb that was slain for us!"

I commenced with this remark—what must be our confusion and our guilt while these natures, more impartial, bend over these things, discuss them, and investigate them, if we believe them slightly, and only regard them superciliously! Is this the guide of our intellect—is this the loftiness of our understanding—that we must treat as foolishness the things which are declared to be the wisdom of God, and the things into which angels desire to look? Is it thus we raise ourselves above the beasts that perish? Is it thus we would be wise? Is it thus we would assert the predominancy of that intellectual nature which we believe is to prevail on earth, and which is to be our destination? O! why then should we spurn those lessons which are now imparted? Why should we deride those monitions which we have now received? And if we want to know whether we shall be justified in giving all our mind to them, see those angels, seraphim with their six wings, how they "desire to look into these things."

Is it possible that any of us can coolly resolve to live in the neglect of these things of which angels are students, but of which we should be beneficiaries? They are not for the life of angels, but they are for *our* life. In them is the very light of our souls; without them we are undone—hopelessly, unmitigably undone! What will be the reflection of the human spirit to whom those things have only presented an aspect of ridicule, who have always regarded them with a feeling of unconcern! What will be his reflection when he is met not by any who "desire to look into these things," but by demons who have heard of these things from afar. Mechanically they would say, "Give way, make room; here arrives a new rebel; a new form of iniquity is entered among the domains of the perished and the lost. *We* never rejected a Saviour: *we* never neglected his great salvation; *we* never set at nought his cross; *we* were never enemies of the cross of Christ as that cross was exhibited or presented to themselves. Here is another style of rebels; here is a new form of delinquency. Give room, and make way! Art thou become weak as we? Art thou become lost as we? But this is fire prepared for the devil and his angels: it was not kindled for *you*—it is not fit for *you*: there must be another blast in order to awaken its fierceness; there must be another element in order to infuriate its rage. It was prepared for 'the devil and his angels:' we feel it, we suffer it, amidst these chains which are never, never to be dissolved! Pass on to your own pit, and find your own hell. This, with all our agonizing recollections, never torments us—a salvation despised, a Redeemer refused."

Christian brethren, I congratulate you this morning that you have had the display and the enforcement of these things so long in this sanctuary. Loving the Gospel you will feel it your duty to support the Gospel, into whose profundities the "angels desire to look." Here it has its home and its shrine. May this sanctuary fall: "Raze it, raze it, even unto the foundation thereof," when there is heard in it another Gospel, when Christ shall be cast down in it from its excellency, and when despite shall be done unto the Spirit of grace. Never may such a catastrophe ensue: but while it is the home and the shrine of the Gospel, may it obtain your present and your future support!

THE BEATITUDES—POVERTY OF SPIRIT.

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REV. J. RUDGE, D.D.

ST. SEPULCHRE'S CHURCH, SNOW HILL, NOVEMBER 14, 1824.

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“Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the kingdom of heaven.”—MATTHEW, v. 3.

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IN the last discourse on these words, I suggested some general observations on the nature and character of that blessedness to which they refer. And our present employment is, to inquire into that heavenly temper of mind and disposition of soul, to which our Lord has annexed a beatitude, viz. poverty of spirit: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.”

And here, paradoxical as it may seem, poverty of spirit is one of the brightest jewels which adorn the Christian's crown, and one which he must never fail to wear during the whole of his pilgrimage through this earthly Canaan: nor must he dream that he can ever attain unto the heavenly one, the celestial Canaan, without this grace and ornament of the angels in light, and of the saints in glory. A man must be poor in his own spirit, before God fills him with the graces, and makes him rich with the gifts of his Spirit; and he must be sensible how lost and undone he is by nature and by wicked works, before he can obtain the health, and mercy, and salvation, which are by Jesus Christ. “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance; and not unto the whole, but to the sick; I am sent as a physician, to heal their maladies, and absolve them from their sins.” Let them but feel their wound, and I will apply the cure—even the health and salvation of their souls. Thus to embrace the proffered medicine, and the healing remedy, all that is proud in thought, and lofty in imagination must be brought low, and humility must conduct the contrite spirit, where all, who sue for mercy, can alone find it, at the feet of Jesus.

That poverty of spirit is absolutely requisite, in order to obtain blessedness, is evident from the considerations to which I shall now advert. May they impress your minds with seriousness, and, by the Spirit of God, may this indispensable possession be now and everlastingly yours.

*First*, it is utterly impossible that we can ever receive the graces which are necessary to salvation, until we are “poor in spirit.” While we are filled with lofty ideas of our own importance and self-sufficiency, we are not fit objects and recipients of divine grace. He that is full, requires nothing more; and he who is righteous in his own eyes, will not aspire to become holier and better: nor is the heart, which is full of pride and vanity, the proper soil upon which the seeds of the Spirit can be sown, and the fruits of righteousness can vegetate.

Our Lord observes, that no man putteth new wine into old bottles. To preserve its quality and strength, new ones are required. This is a beautiful and striking illustration; and I thus apply it. To preserve the new wine of the Spirit, the old man of sin must be destroyed, and the old bottles of pride must be broken. They cannot exist together without the wine running out and the bottles perishing; therefore must a man be emptied of self, of the old man, with its affections and lusts, before the precious wine of divine grace be poured into his soul. Hath not Jehovah expressly declared, that "he will look to this man, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word\*!" "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones †." Observe, further, my brethren, that none but the "poor in spirit," are embraced in the commission of Christ. "‡ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; to bind up the broken-hearted; to comfort them that mourn." And to whom do these expressions apply? Why, to none but those whose hearts are humbled by the conviction of sin, and by the consciousness of iniquity; whose very souls are pierced with anguish, for the corruptions of their nature, and the unworthiness of their conduct. They feel the logs and fetters of their sins, and have no other wish but to be emancipated from their burthen, and relieved from their yoke. These are the persons to whom the commission of Christ was sent; these only are the persons, to whom the promised rest will be given, and the promised comfort be conveyed.

*Secondly*, and the reason upon which this inference is founded is this, that none will accept of Christ and his benefits, unless they possess this indispensable qualification—poverty of spirit. No man can estimate fully the worth and excellence of Christ, nor see him as an all-precious Saviour, until he has been brought to a sense of his own vileness, and all attendance upon ordinances will be in vain, until this conviction has been produced. You may hear sermons, and make long prayers, but without any saving and improving efficacy. So long as we esteem ourselves "rich, and increased in goods, and in want of nothing," we shall not apply for any share in those riches with which he enricheth indeed his people. But the moment in which we are convinced that we are, like the church of Laodicea, "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," and dying sinners, in that moment will Christ appear sweet to the soul, and disperse the riches of his grace, be as a comforter to the wretched, as eyes to the blind, as covering to the naked, and as life to the dead. With what readiness, then, should we apply to Christ for "gold tried in the fire, that we may be rich;" for white raiment, even the beautiful robe of his righteousness, with which we may be clothed; for eye-salve, with which we may see; and for the bread and water of life, with which our hungry and thirsty souls may be strengthened and refreshed—"O, be zealous, then, and repent." How precious will the spiritual balm of Gilead be to the soul, which languisheth with weariness for the wound of sin, and for the malady of transgression. And how acceptable will an able surety be to the poor insolvent debtor who is about to be dragged into the dark dungeon of endless despair. Yes, Christians, it behoves us to be "poor in spirit," and deeply humbled

\* Isaiah, lvi. 1, 2.

† Isaiah, lvii. 15.

‡ Isaiah, lxi. 1, 2.

because of our iniquities, before we can well appreciate our mighty surety and deliverer, and can seek with earnestness for the succours of his Spirit, and for the riches of his grace.

*Thirdly*, this heavenly temper of mind is indispensable in another respect. Without poverty of spirit we cannot enter into glory. Thus saith the text. "Blessed are the poor in spirit:" and why? "for their's is the kingdom of heaven." While we continue in our natural state, we are, like Nebuchadnezzar, the king, lifted up in spirit, and hardened in pride; full of our self-importance, and swelling with vanity; the very gate of heaven appears too strait to admit of our entering in. We become giddy with our own imaginary elevation; and walking on the battlements of our conceited importance, deem ourselves to be as gods, to whom the multitude below must bow, and the people offer idolatrous homage and service. Such is man. It is, therefore, requisite, that this pride of the natural man should be brought low, and this vanity of the heart be humbled; that the being, who exacts this idolatry and plumes himself upon this magnitude of his own size and consequence, should be reduced to his proper level, and to those due proportions, according to which only an entrance by the narrow gate of heaven can be effected. And this can only be done by poverty of spirit. It is only by reducing the cable that it can pass through the eye of a needle: untwist the small parts and threads of which it is made, and the passage is easily effected. So of man, his natural pride is so great, and his natural size so disproportioned to the narrow gate through which he must pass, and which conducts into the celestial city, that his exclusion is indispensable. But untwist the cable of pride, and by poverty of spirit make the man poor in his own eyes, and reduce him to those dimensions consistent with that spirit, and then he will find, that an entrance into the kingdom of heaven will be abundantly manifested unto him. Thus from the *cottage of poverty of spirit*, he passes into the *palace of glory* in heaven. Verily, my brethren, "blessed are the poor in spirit."

Here it may not be improper to make a few distinctions between those who are *poor in spirit*, and those of whom it may be said that they are poor-spirited. No two appellations can be more distinct the one from the other. The poor-spirited are those who act below the dignity of a man, and unbecoming the character of a Christian; who would descend to any meanness, and scruple not at any atrocity, by which they could gratify their sordid passions, and attain their iniquitous ends; who, to realize some favourite scheme, and mark some nefarious purpose, would be the hypocrites of a sect, and the saints of a party; who, for some paltry gain, and for some worldly ambition, for the pomp of preferment, and the distinctions of rank, would sacrifice principle, and violate conscience, and be even as an Esau, to sell their birth-right, or as a Judas, to betray their master.

These are your true poor-spirited beings. But there are other shades of the character; but it is unnecessary to particularize them. In the usurious and avaricious speculator, in the fraudulent debtor, in the unjust steward, in the miserable miser, in all, in fact, whose gains are godless, is the character of the poor-spirited to be found in perfect truth and keeping.

But who are to be designated as the poor in spirit? Those only are poor, in the evangelical understanding of the term, who by our Lord are pronounced, "Blessed," and to whom the kingdom of heaven appertains.

Those, who are the truly poor in spirit, are such as have been brought to a humbling sense of their sins, who know their poverty by nature, and are therefore deeply affected; who, finding no goodness in themselves, fly to God for mercy, and place the whole hope of their salvation on the merits and righteousness of their Redeemer. They remember his word, that they are but "unprofitable servants;" and hence, all dependance upon self is renounced, and all pretensions to merit are cast off, as a refuge which will not serve, and as an anchor which will not save them in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment. Of those who thus thought, there are a noble army, and a glorious company of denizens of heaven. In the first rank appears the apostle Paul, who counted all his own righteousness, his attainments, his privileges, as dung, that he might win Christ. Of such was the penitent publican, when he cried out, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." In the same company may be numbered the Syrophenician woman, whose humble spirit made her content to enjoy only the privilege of a dog; and the Roman centurion, who looked upon himself as unworthy to receive Christ under his roof. To these might be added others (of whom the world was not worthy) who obtained a good report through faith, and having endured the cross, now wear the crown at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hence we learn in what a Christian's riches consist; viz., in poverty of spirit, which poverty entitles him to a kingdom. This is one of those paradoxes in Scripture which the men of this world do not, or will not, understand. One of those blocks on which the proud man stumbles, and one of those rocks at which the sensual man takes offence. That a man must pass through the valleys of humility before he can scale the ramparts of salvation; that he must be *poor* before he can be qualified to be *rich* and receive a *kingdom*; that he must become a *fool* in order to his becoming *wise*; that he must *lose* his life in order to *save* it. Why this is more monstrous than the Jewish stumbling-block and rock of offence; a doctrine which deserves to be met with the same ridicule, and to experience the same fate as its founder and abettors did. Yet, thanks be to God, the jeer of the infidel is no test for the truth of Christian doctrine; and, firm as the everlasting hills of the Lord, and immoveable as the rocks of the great and wide sea, is the fact, that they only are rich who see themselves to be poor.

How very different from those humble souls are the proud and haughty in spirit, who "sacrifice unto their own net, and burn incense to their own drag;" who value themselves on account of their mental attainments, fancied goodness, and moral rectitude; who, like the proud Pharisee, vaunt of their own worth, and herald forth their own deeds; who thank God they are not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as the poor publican\*. In every part of the conduct, and throughout every petition of the prayer, of this Pharisee, there is every thing to blame, seeing that he no where appears as a suppliant to ask for mercy, or as a penitent to sue for pardon, and never once acknowledges God kind as a benefactor, and merciful as a judge in pardoning sin and blotting out transgression. All respects self—his exclusive praise, his proud pretensions. What one of the fathers (Ambrose) said once of the story of Naboth, may with equal truth be observed of this Pharisee, that, though

\* Luke, xviii. See Josephus on the character of the Pharisees of his day, which corresponds with the Scripture description.

old as the days of our Lord, it is daily renewed in the practice of many in our generation, not confined to this or that sect or party, but to be found amongst all classes of professing Christians. The Pharisaical heart is but a too common one in the world. Those by whom it is possessed are pleased with their condition. They think that they possess sufficient merit in themselves, and scorn to be under any obligations to another. Their language to their Lord is. We will not have this man to reign over us, to dictate the measure of our obedience, and the degree of our faith! Christ tells them that they are blind, and freely offers them “eye-salve, that they may see;” but they will neither believe the one, nor accept of the other. He tells them that they are naked, and offers them his “white raiment” to cover them; but entertaining a different opinion, they consequently reject his friendly offer, and all-sufficient robe of righteousness. Ah! my brethren, how dangerous this state of mind, and this false estimate of a self-righteous man! Would that the advice of a friend and the offers of a Saviour could induce him to think otherwise; to change the counsels of his proud heart, and to come to Christ in all due submission and obedience. For then would there be peace and salvation to his soul, and that perilous rock would be shunned, upon which so many of immortal beings have foundered; and those who have trusted in themselves that they were righteous, have been wrecked. A word more, and a word, I hope, to the wise—*verbum est sapienti*—be warned of your danger; flee this rock; come to Christ; seek salvation alone in him; whose righteousness hath withstood the shock of ages, will withstand the gates of hell; and in which, firm and secure, yours will be the blessing of God, and the possession of the heavenly kingdom promised to the poor in spirit. To Christ, the Lord our Righteousness be everlasting praise. Amen.



## THE SUBJECT MODE, AND CONSTANCY OF APOSTOLIC MINISTRATION.

REV. J. SHERMAN,

ORANGE STREET CHAPEL, MAY 15, 1836\*.

“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”—Acts, v. 42.

THIS chapter contains a brief account of the successful preaching of the apostles and primitive Christians in Jerusalem, and the persecutions which they endured for its sake. One verse describes it—miracles were performed by them, the people magnified them, and multitudes were added to them. That which would have taken an historian a page to dilate upon is in a few words given us by the inspired writers.

The high-priest and the Sanhedrim who had become jealous of their authority, and fearful of the mighty power which the apostles and primitive disciples would gain in Jerusalem if they suffered them to proceed, became quite alarmed at the consequences which might ensue; and therefore they determined to arrest them and to put them in prison. But their Lord and Master, who has power over bolts and bars, though they be made of the finest iron, and so secured as the wisdom and ingenuity of man might secure them, the Master sent one of his servants by night, and told him to loose all these bolts and bars and bring his servants out of prison. An angel went for this especial purpose, and said to the honourable prisoners, “Go stand in the gate of the temple, and speak unto the people all the words of this life.” Obedient to the heavenly mandate, and fearless of human authority when they had their Master on their side, away they went and preached; they entered into the temple early in the morning and taught. Like the Philistines, who supposed that when they had Samson safe in Gaza they might sleep in security, but he during their sleep carried away the gates to an adjacent hill, and laid them there as trophies of his power; so these spiritual Philistines slept calmly and securely all that night. But in the morning, in the twenty-first verse we read, “the high-priest came and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel gathered together,” and commanded to have the men brought to them. How sad was their consternation when the officer returned, saying, “The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the sentinels who were placed at the door standing in their place; but when we opened the door, lo, the prisoners were escaped.” And while they were telling their tale one came in breathless anxiety and haste, to say, “Lo, the men you shut up in the prison are standing in the temple at this moment, and are

\* On behalf of the London City Mission.

preaching." Such was the power and authority which the apostles and primitive disciples had over the populace, that the captain who was immediately dispatched with a band of soldiers to go and arrest them, dare not lay a finger on them, lest the people should stone them. And therefore this honourable captain, who perhaps never dreaded the face of man before, was obliged to become a humble supplicant to the despised followers of the Nazarene, to come quietly with him lest they be stoned by the people. By this means they were brought before the council: and now what is the charge against them? "Did not we straightway command you that ye should not teach nor preach in this name in Jerusalem? and behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine." How did they meet the charge? By denying it; by palliating it; by attempting to excuse it? No. How did they meet the charge? Hear their unconquerable, unanswerable, and magnanimous reply: "Whether it be right to obey God or man judge ye. We have received our authority from heaven, and if you controvert the authority of heaven, judge yourselves whether we have any right to obey you." Unable to confute their statement, they determined to send them as speedily as possible out of the world, and they immediately took counsel, as we are told by the context, to slay them. But, my brethren, we believe that when God has a work for his servants to perform, neither men nor devils can dispatch them till their time arrives. Whitfield used to say, and Toplady also in this very pulpit, "A minister is immortal till his work is done." And so it appeared in their case. Not all the bulls of the pope, not all the temptations of the enemy, not all the machinations of the populace, not one and all the attempts upon Luther's life, could dispatch that holy man until the Reformation was completed, until he had lit up such a light in Germany, that Satan and his emissaries until this day have not been able to put out. So at this time, though they threatened them, God raised out of their own number a man to be the apostles' friend. Gamaliel, the tutor of Paul, happened to be present in the assembly on this occasion; and he said, most wisely, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." And as far as the sentiment went, with him they agreed. Most people will go with us as far as sentiment, but they do not like to go with us as far as practice. And so with Gamaliel; they went with him as far as sentiment; but before the apostles were sent away they took care to beat them, and after they had beaten them they let them go, charging them no more to preach in this name. But this punishment of the apostles was only like oil to the flame, and made it burn brighter. What did they? Why they went from the hall "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." They bound the thorns about their brow as their glory, and entered on the work with renewed ardour; for in the verse of my text, which immediately follows that, we are told, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

And beloved, if apostolic example be any precedent for us, then we have here a sanction for "THE LONDON CITY MISSION." If apostolic example be any precedent for us, then every individual in this assembly will become a friend to such a society, that sends forth agents into every part to teach and to preach Jesus Christ. Without any immediate reference to the society it will be my endeavour in the first place to shew you the subject of apostolical minis-

tration; secondly, the mode of apostolical ministration; and, thirdly, the constancy of apostolical ministration.

First, then, we have **THE SUBJECT OF APOSTOLICAL MINISTRATION**: "Jesus Christ." "They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." And be it remembered, my beloved, that this was not one subject of many that they were to preach, but it was *the only one*. The motto of the apostles and primitive Christians was, "We preach Christ crucified, though it be to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, yet to them that are saved it is the power of God and the wisdom of God." And therefore the accusation against these holy men was this, that they preached Jesus Christ and the resurrection. Now there must be something in this subject, beloved, which is worthy; something in this subject worthy of all men to listen to, or it would not be so often referred to as the great subject of apostolic ministration. And it is worthy your attentive consideration for yourselves this evening, and worthy also of your attentive consideration as that subject which is to be sent into all the world to every creature. Let us examine it.

In the first place this subject of apostolic ministration is a subject of *infinite importance*. Will you let your minds this evening just weigh the full force of that sentiment—"Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ?" I suppose, my brethren, that how to be saved is the most important question, that the trembling, agitated, and guilty mind can ever ask. Millions have asked that question with anxiety: "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" And although precisely the same words are not used, yet multitudes shut out from hearing the Gospel, and multitudes who have no inclination to hear the Gospel, are constantly in other terms, yet with similar sentiments, asking themselves, "How can I be saved? How can I be happy?" It is the tendency of the human mind to seek after happiness.

But, brethren, this subject explains how man can be just with God, and how God can be just while he saves man. This shews him that he, in all his guilt, by the Gospel plan can be saved, and God in all his perfections honoured while he saves him. I say there is no subject that can be so important for the sinner as this one grand and distinguished subject. Sinner, do you believe me this evening, that this is to you like Goliath's sword was to David—there is none like it? You may be interested in many subjects; you may love music; you may love history; you may apply your mind to any particular subject: but you may die to-morrow; and without an interest in Christ you are lost, you perish and therefore to know how you are to be saved must be matter of infinite importance to you. And this is a matter of infinite importance to the world. The gates of paradise are shut against that soul that despises this doctrine, that rejects this doctrine. A man is at liberty to reject any other subject but this; but if he rejects this, if he receives not this, it is at the peril of his happiness, of his salvation, at the loss of heaven, at the loss of God's favour for ever and ever. Hear me: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Again, this subject of apostolic ministration is a subject of *unequalled suitability*. Its adaptation to the moral necessities of mankind is its peculiar excellency. It is the catholicon of God to all man's moral disease: it is "the wine of the kingdom," for all man's sorrows and distresses: it is "the balm of Gilead," for all those mental miseries which man in this world of sorrows is called to feel. And therefore when the angel carried the first tidings of this gospel to the shepherds, he said, "Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be"—to you? No—"to all people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." And so the apostles took this remedy, this adopted remedy, to the moral wants and woes of mankind, and preached it to all people. I know there are shades of guilt and shades of character amongst men. I am satisfied that all men are not alike as it respects the depth of their criminality; but there is no individual that does not need this plan of mercy. The curse has swept itself over all the human race: there is not one single exception to the sweeping charge, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Therefore all need God's plan of mercy; therefore when the apostles went to the learned Corinthians, though they were elevated in mental culture far above them that preached, yet he took this among them for his subject—"I am determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." When he was in the prison, and the jailor was in the deepest distress respecting what he must do to be saved, they preached to the malignant jailor the same subject—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." When the Apostle stood on Mars' Hill, and preached before the Areopagus of Athens, the most learned assembly in the whole world, he preached the same subject—"Him whom ye ignorantly worship declare I unto you." When he went to the poor sick man, Eneas, who had kept his bed for many years, he took the same subject: "Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." When he stood before King Agrippa, he preached to him the same subject—that Christ should suffer, and rise again the third day from the dead. When he went to the Colossians, a people who were very near and dear to his heart, still the same subject was taken—"Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom." When he went to the murderers of Christ he carried the same subject: "Him hath God exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins."

Beloved, whatever the character of man, whatever his mental cultivation, however men are sunk in misery—*one* thing is needful, and one thing is equally needful for all; and that one thing is Jesus Christ and salvation through him.

" This remedy did wisdom find,  
To heal diseases of the mind;  
This sovereign balm, whose virtues can  
Restore the ruined creature, man."

But then, beloved, this is a subject of *infinite variety*. The mind of man is so constituted that it never can be happy without variety; and that variety is furnished us in the heavens and on the earth. God, in order to display his glory and in order to adapt himself to the constitution of our minds, has furnished us in both worlds with the greatest wonders, from the meanest insect which crawls upon the earth to the planet which tracks its course in unlimited

space. All the heavens and all the earth present countless variety of colour, of quality, and of life. But in Jesus Christ all God's various wonders meet: he is the great centre of both worlds, in whom the glories of both are concentrated. "Take," said that good man, Rutherford, whose heart was so full of the love of the Saviour—"Take ten thousand paradises, and all their beauties, and put them together; the finest river that ever flowed in the whole world; the most odoriferous plants that ever sent forth their fragrance in the air; the most delicious fruits and beauteous flowers that ever the eye knew; all the melodious music that ever was raised by the birds of heaven: put them together, and none of their beauties are to be compared for an instant with our lovely and incomparable Lord Jesus Christ." "Nay," said one, "he is altogether lovely;" and the sinner that feels the sweetness of his voice will join again consort with the children of the Saviour, and so "his mouth is most sweet," when he speaks pardon and peace to the soul.

I can hardly look at an object in creation without being reminded of him; and the Bible is intended that whichever way I look it should preach to me about Jesus Christ. I am called by the providence of God occasionally to walk in a certain path: Christ is *the way*, and that path is to remind me of him. I look to the heavens, and the sun is shining upon me: Christ is the *Sun of Righteousness*. I go out on a star-light night, and I see the heavens bespangled: and he is *the bright and Morning Star*. I cut the vine that climbs up by the sides of my house: and he is *the Vine* whose fruit is to invigorate and cheer the spirits of man. The food spread on my table reminds me that he is *the Bread of Life*, and "the meat of which if a man eat he shall live for ever." He is a *Rock* to support me, a *Fountain* to cheer me. He is *the Branch of Righteousness* at which I am to gaze—*the desire of all nations*. He is the *Prophet, Priest, and King*, the *Redeemer*, the *Friend*, the portion of his church, and the all in all to every sinner.

Now here is variety for every hearer. Some ministers are very much afraid of preaching on this one subject, because they tire their people. What! not a sufficiency of variety? At the ordination of one holy man, when he was called upon to state what he would do and preach, he said, "I shall have to preach three times on every sabbath-day. My morning discourse will be about Jesus Christ and him crucified. As I know you love variety, my afternoon discourse will be about Jesus Christ and him crucified: and as I know you love variety, I shall take the same subject in the evening, and preach Jesus Christ and him crucified: and as you have many village stations around you, and as I shall have to preach twice in the week besides, I shall preach each time Jesus Christ and him crucified." The Lord close the mouths of the agents of this Society before they shall cease to teach and preach Jesus Christ and him crucified!

It is not only a subject of infinite variety, but a subject of *peculiar sweetness*. Ah! we have often sung together that hymn of Hart's which he is now singing in more melodious notes in heaven—

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear!  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
And drives away his fear."

My dear hearers, what is so sweet to a man who is starving as food? What is so sweet to a poor weary traveller as rest? What is so sweet to an individual

who is ready to die for thirst as the fountain springing up before him? What is so sweet to the criminal who is condemned by the judge as pardon from the king? What so sweet to him who stands before the bar of his country as for one to declare him innocent before the whole people? What so sweet to the man who groans with the burden and power of sin within him as the sanctification of his spirit, and the promotion of holiness within him? What so sweet to the man who says, "I have forsaken my inheritance; I have no right to heaven," as to hear that through Christ heaven is made his; that He is the Way, and, by being the Way, cherubim and the flaming sword are removed from the gates of paradise; and now through Christ he can have access into the garden, eat of the tree of life, and live for ever!

I read lately somewhere of the crew of a small vessel which was shipwrecked, who were out in a small boat for thirteen days: and only five out of the twenty-six who entered the boat lived to reach the land. They had so often been disappointed with, as they thought, the sight of land, and with the hope that sprung up in their bosom when they saw a ship pass that way, that they sunk down in the vessel to die, and said there was now no hope for them. But one of them thought he saw land; still he could not believe his own eyes, for he had been so often disappointed: but he looked again, and again, and again, and at last his hopes were confirmed, and he summoned up all the strength which his situation had left him, and cried out to the little crew that was left in the boat, "Land! land! land!" and they mustered up their energies which seemed all exhausted, rowed for their lives, and reached the land. What was so sweet to these men as that land? How delightful must the sight be to the poor sinner trembling on the confines of the bottomless pit, and feeling the condemnation of God's law on his conscience, to see Christ coming to him with pardon in his hand, and grace in his hand, and telling him to be of good cheer, his sins are forgiven him! There is no subject that is so sweet as this; there is no subject that has such music and sweetness to the man who is thus utterly lost! It is this which is to be the moral cure of the moral woes of this dreadful and direful land.

But, again, it is a subject of *singular efficacy*. It is the power of God and it is the wisdom of God. And what subject, my brethren, has the efficacy which this possesses? Mahometanism, it is true, has converted its millions; but how has it done it? Why it has done it by the sword and by the allowance of the indulgence of base lusts. Idolatry, it is true, has its millions upon millions; but they groan under the slavery of their idols, and curse their senseless and blood-thirsty deities for the slavery which they impose upon them. Beloved, popery claims its millions too; but fire, and prison, and debasing superstitions, are its chief weapons, and every man that believes it is rendered worse by conversion to it. But without any carnal weapons, without any human authority, the simple preaching of Christ, the simple force of the great truth that Christ came into the world to save sinners, and the adaptation of this truth to man's moral necessities, which first conquered the whole Roman world, brought England into the state into which it now is, and will, by its blessed conquests, finally convert and subdue the whole world. If you are alarmed at the wretchedness, and vice, and misery, of many of the inhabitants of London, see, my brethren, the trophies and the victories of the simple preaching of Jesus Christ. Look at them: Saul of Tarsus, the persecuting bigot; Mary Magdalene, the habi-

tation of foul demons; the thief who had spent his life in disobeying the laws of God and his country, in the very last hour of his existence; the Romans among whom sin reigned, the first chapter of the epistle to whom contains a list of crimes enough to appal any mind; the Corinthians, the vices of whom are enough to excite a blush while we read them. But by the simple preaching of Jesus Christ to these and to hundreds more since it has been tried, not only in England, but in Asia and in Africa, and among the poor Hottentots, whom civilians, and philosophers, and others used to tell us formerly were a link between the brute creation and man—these links have been united by the grand link to the church of Christ: and it is wonderful to say now, that these very Hottentots, converted by the simple preaching of Christ, the government find so useful, that they have entered into contracts with them; and they now find that these very men have minds capable of elevation, and dignity, and glory. Let but this one single subject be preached, and you convert savages into saints, slaves into freemen, impure people into holy people, and miserable people into happy people.

Now contrast this subject with any other topic: contrast it with moral suasion: take essays on sobriety and virtue, and let the orator Cicero deliver them himself; and what effect will they produce? Why just this effect: The missionaries belonging to the Moravian Missionary Society went to publish the Gospel to the Greenlanders: no impression was made for some years: they preached to them the necessity of abstinence from covetousness and drunkenness: they told them there was one God, and they ought to serve him; they told them it was necessary that men should live in holiness and morality. "Why," the people used to reply, "we knew all this before; we were quite sure of this before." But one day one of them came near them, and it so happened that a gust of wind blew one of the verses of the Bible which they were then translating into their language, upon a particular place; the poor man took up this paper, and asked the missionary to read it, and he read, I think, this passage: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." "What did you say?" said this man: "read me that again: what did you say—that Christ came to save sinners? Read me that again, that God loved me, and gave his Son for me; read me that again." And he read it, and read it again, and the missionaries soon began to find, that the way to civilize, and moralize, and evangelize the people, was not to go by the circuitous route of first preaching morality, but to begin by preaching Christ, and morality as the handmaid of the truth would necessarily and essentially follow. And from that time, the history of the Moravian Mission tells us, a revival took place, and God honoured their mission to the utmost of their wishes.

Ah, dear friends, I wish I could take you to some of the village stations around the chapel where it is my privilege to labour; I wish I could take you to hear the tale which the wife will sometimes tell of the husband, and the husband sometimes tell of the wife; the children of the parents, and the parents of the children. This one affected me very much. A poor woman came to me and said, "Sir, you know what a sad man my husband was; but God has in his mercy changed his heart; and now instead of swearing and every abomination in the house, we are all peace, and we are all joy." "How did this happen?" I inquired. "Why," she replied, "he was passing by that vil-

lage chapel where such a man preaches, and he crept in, ashamed to be seen ; but a passage of Scripture fastened upon his mind." "And what was that passage?" said I. "Why, Sir, it was this—'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'" "Well," I said, "what effect has this produced?" "Why sir, I was confined six weeks ago: before, in my confinements, he would blaspheme and curse ; but now when the tidings were given that the child was born, he came to my bed-side, and he brought a Bible with him, and he said, 'Now my dear let me read a chapter with you, and pray to God, and thank him for your merciful deliverance.' Then our sabbath is so differently spent to what it used to be ; he will hear the children their catechism and read a chapter in the Bible ; and their history is now a little heaven upon earth to what we ever had before." And what is all this accomplished by? Why, the simple preaching of Jesus Christ and him crucified. Instead of the thorn comes up the myrtle tree, a beautiful ever-green ; instead of the brier comes up the fir-tree, a useful excellent tree ; and it is to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

There is one thing more on this subject, and that is, that it is a subject of *eternal duration*. Many subjects which are excellent in their nature, and adapted to the present wants and comforts of man, involve only the interests of time. There are, my brethren, subjects connected with political economy, subjects connected with scientific investigation, subjects connected with commercial enterprise, that add much in their investigation to the comforts and happiness of man as long as we live here. But then they leave him on the waters of Jordan, and they do not go with him over the stream into the promised land : they leave him here, and all the advantages he has derived he leaves behind. But this one subject promises present peace, and tells the possessor of it how he shall have eternal felicity. It does not carry him to the bank and then leave him, it does not stay on this side, as the two tribes did, but it goes over and into the promised land, and dwells there for ever and ever. I thank God for the Gospel now, for the comforts it bestows now : I would be a Christian if its influence extended no further than the waters of Jordan ; if it accompanied me only to the borders of the grave I would be a Christian : for "*now*" there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus ; for "*now* are we the sons of God ;" for "*now* we rejoice in God, by whom we have received the atonement :"  
*now* there is blessedness and peace, and happiness and comfort, in receiving these truths. But, brethren, although there is great blessedness *now*, it is but a taste of what is *to come*. A man may have rich and large enjoyments, and many of God's people have most extensive enjoyments, so that they seem to have two heavens, one here, and another by and by. But in the highest extent of their enjoyments it is but a *taste* · it is life *begun*, that is eternal life in *maturity* ; it is life in the *bud*, that is eternal life in the fulness of its *flower* ; it is eternal life in the twilight of the man, that is eternal life in the meridian brightness of the noon-day sun. What does our Saviour say of the eternal world to which his saints and children are to come? "Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." And "there is no more going out," said the apostle. Beloved, if it were only for the negative advantage of this heavenly state, that would be very great, that there is no more sin, no **more sorrow**, no **more crying**, no more cares, no more doubt, and **no**



more separation from one another. That would be great, and that would be blessed; but to these is joined, "to die and be with Christ, which is far better." Why the Christian's dying-day is his birth-day, on which he begins a new state of blessed existence. His dying-day is his coronation-day, when his Master takes the crown and puts it on his head, and makes him a king over every sin and lust for ever and ever. His dying-day is his marriage-day; the marriage of the Lamb is come and is consummated, and he goes to sit down at the table of the Lord for ever and ever. It is his coming of age, and entering on his inheritance. And all this arises from this incomparable subject of the preaching of Jesus Christ.

O, my brethren, it is my earnest desire for this vast congregation, that they, when they die, through the preaching of Jesus Christ and faith in him, may stand at the side of that blessed King, where the harpers are harping with their harps, and where millions of hearts, multitudes redeemed by blood, say, "Salvation to him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Brethren, what will be the redeemed sinner's subject in heaven? What will be the subject of his unbounded admiration there? What will be the subject of his songs? What will be the subject of his employment? If you read the book of the Revelations, you will find that no subject will engage his attention but Jesus Christ and him crucified. And now, dear hearers, I have stated to you the subject. To pluck a man from drowning, to save a man from death, to advance man's temporal interest, are worthy of a Christian. But to save a soul from death, to raise a soul sunk in woe to heavenly glory, and heavenly felicity, this is worthy of the human mind, and this is worthy of the subject of the Gospel. Hence our Lord beautifully and pathetically observed, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye die they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness: use your money for converting souls to God, that when these people who are so converted die, "when these fail," and go to heaven, they may be your harbingers, and when you die welcome you into everlasting habitations. And I cannot conceive a guinea better spent, or a hundred pounds better spent, than to lay it out on the conversion of souls, and those souls to go before you to heaven, and welcome you, as their friend, their patron, and best benefactor, in saving them and bringing them hither.

Now, brethren, this is the subject. This place, I remember, has been long renowned for this subject. I delight to think that I stand in the place in which good Mr. Toplady promulgated this sweet doctrine—Jesus Christ and him crucified. Although we cannot but lament the bitterness of spirit which was occasionally manifested in his writings, yet we glorify the God of grace who raised him up to publish the distinguishing truths which we have been stating this evening.

But I must press forward in the second part of my subject, to shew you, THE METHOD OF THE APOSTOLICAL MINISTRATION. And this, you perceive, was two-fold: it was by public preaching, and it was by private teaching. It was by public preaching in *the temple* they preached Jesus Christ; in *every house* they taught Jesus Christ.

First, then, it was by *public preaching*. Now this was according to the

dying charge of our Saviour, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." And you will recollect this was according to the plan of divine wisdom. By the foolishness of preaching "it pleased God to save them that believe." Not by foolish preaching, but by the simplicity of the method; by that which individuals account the foolishness of preaching, it pleased God to save them that believe. Yes, my brethren, the subject must be communicated by preaching, and it is a mode adapted to the wants, the habits, and the constitution of the human mind. Will you just look at this for a moment or two. People are fond of a crowd; they love gathering together where great numbers meet: they will go and endure a great number of difficulties to meet in the crowd. This seems to be from the peculiarity of the human mind to love society. Men gather together in large masses: and God has so ordained it, that by the preaching of the Gospel, multitudes should be gathered together to listen to it. They could not spare the time, nor the money that books would require, to derive the same instruction; therefore they are congregated together to save both. The same attention employed in reading would not produce the same effects that are produced by preaching; there is a certain something to charm, an enthusiasm in the living voice, in the human voice, in the expressive tones, in the piercing look, in the animated manner of the speaker, which no books in the world can supply: this is a part of the moral constitution for the amelioration of mankind. There is also something in the *place*; there is something charming to the mind in a place hallowed and consecrated to the service of God: and there is something peculiarly inviting and charming in a large assembly—a multitude, like that of which Mr. Williams, the missionary, tells us, of three thousand individuals gathered under the wide-spreading branches of the cocoa-nut tree, for prayer and praise, uniting with one common voice to magnify the riches of divine mercy. That which we sung when we were quite children, we can sing now: the sweetness of it is not yet lost:

"Lord, how delightful 'tis to see  
A whole assembly worship thee!  
At once they sing, at once they pray:  
They hear of heaven, and learn the way."

And the renewed mind says,

"I have been there, and still will go,  
'Tis like a little heaven below."

Now God, who knows better than we do the constitution of the human mind, commands that this should be so proclaimed as we have just stated: and the apostles and primitive Christians followed out this plan—they communicated the subject by *preaching*: and if ever the world is converted, preachers must be multiplied, and multiplied to an extent of which, at present, we have very little knowledge: if ever the metropolis is converted it must be by the multiplication of preachers; we must not wait till new churches are built, and till new chapels are built, large and capacious enough to hold the assembling multitudes. No: although no man rejoices more than I do at the multiplication of sacred edifices; yet people are dying, and we must not wait a moment: and as the dissenters have done long ago, and as the evangelical clergy are now doing, and under the sanction of authority, I am happy to say, we must convert

school-rooms into preaching-places, and barns into chapels, and every house we can enter for a spot in which multitudes can be assembled to hearken to the words of life.

This was the apostolical plan. John Mark's house was the house where the people met together to pray for Peter's deliverance. The church assembled in the house of Aquila and Priscilla. The church assembled in the house of Onesiphorus, which is stated as the church which is at his house. And if these cannot be obtained, then we must have open-air preaching—and why not? With the canopy of heaven for a sounding-board, and the multitudes around for a congregation, why not have open-air preaching? O the multitudes which that man of God, the saviour of whose name will long be known within these realms, George Whitfield—the multitudes that that man of God gathered together, and published to them the glad doctrines of the cross! In all weathers that man went forth and testified the Gospel of the grace of God: and so far from thinking out-door preaching a dishonourable act, I should be glad to be the bearer of the books of that man whose time and whose talents would enable him to engage in so honourable and so happy a service. Every spot is consecrated; there is not a single spot but it is consecrated. If you go on board a ship, Christ was there before, and preached on board a ship to the people. If you go to the hills, the apostles preached there before you. If you go to the prisons, the apostles preached there before you. And as in Ireland it is all consecrated ground, and the clergy, and the dissenters can preach together, and hold their meetings together—so I hail the day when the wall which is partly crumbling shall be broken down, and my Saviour be preached in every place, and every place be hallowed as the spot from which his name shall resound. I cannot but rejoice that such events are now taking place.

They also communicated this subject by *private teaching*. They were not satisfied with public preaching, but they went to every house, teaching and preaching Jesus Christ. This is the communication of the truth to *individuals*, as the other was the communication of the truth to *multitudes*. They preached and they taught from house to house. David had often heard Nathan speak in public; but he heard him in *private* to purpose when he came and related his beautiful parable, and then said, "Thou art the man." O that sermon in his own house—of what mighty effect it was to bring the sinner to a sense of his sin, and to inquire for mercy and pardon! The jailer heard the apostle preach in a room, and heard him preach with power, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

I doubt not that a part of this private tuition consisted in the application of the consolation of the Gospel to individuals who had been pricked in their hearts, and their minds somewhat illuminated by the truth: they had to strengthen them that were weak, and to bring back those who had fallen away. But the *chief* end of this private tuition was, to seek out that which was lost. For many years past, perhaps for many centuries, in England, Christianity has been considered rather a defensive than an aggressive system: but the relation in which Christianity stands to the world is not a defensive one: it can defend itself, as Mr. Hill said, when an individual said he had preached a very moral sermon, and that he must guard the Gospel—"Ah," (said he), "that is a poor Gospel that cannot guard itself." So we say: Christianity is not merely a defence for itself, but it is for aggression on the moral woes and lusts of

mankind, and to reduce the powers and ramparts of Satan into a level with the riches of Christ.

Now ministers are not only to teach and preach to them who will come, but they are to go to those who will not come. They are not only to invite people to come to the temple, but they are to go to their houses—"in every house they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ." When the Saviour ordered his disciples to preach his Gospel, he did not say, "Now you go to Jerusalem, and stand up there, and preach in my name; and send messengers all round the country, telling them to come and hear you illustrate the Gospel of the grace of God." No; but he said, "Go into all the world; take the Gospel to them, and let them be benefited by this aggressive system of the power of divine truth." Therefore the more humble disciples went from house to house; they conversed with the people, told them their moral guilt, shewed them the preciousness of the Saviour, exhibited the fulness and freeness of redeeming love, and the blessedness of believing in Christ.

And such must be *our* plan; and such is the plan of THE CITY MISSION. Many people stay from public worship, not from vice, but from habit—many from ignorance, many from prejudice, many from indifference, and many other reasons connected with their state. Now to these the messenger of mercy from this society must go, warning them, as Lot warned his daughter and sons-in-law, and telling them to come out of the city: they are to go wherever they can, and to draw the bow at a venture: who can tell but that the message will be made effectual to their salvation and their comfort?

Finally, I have to show you THE CONSTANCY OF APOSTOLICAL MINISTRATION. "Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ." At this Pentecostal season, when we look at the Acts of the apostles, we suppose that every thing was done by divine influence: and objectors are telling us, that that was a remarkable time, and that it was by divine influence men were converted. Doubtless all that is the truth; no soul will ever be converted without divine influence, but we must not look slightly at means: means must have their proper place as well as divine influence. If I look at one of the reservoirs of the New River Company, I expect that there must be pipes to convey that water to individuals. If I take the water to drink it will refresh me; but if I want it at my house I must have a pipe to convey it. Now ministers are the channels through which divine influence flows; and the means of grace are the pipes through which this influence flows to us. It was in the use of the means that such influence was bestowed in apostolic times, and such wonders wrought: to thousands they preached, and thousands were taught; they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ. Only let the same means *now* be put in operation. Three thousand were converted on the day of Pentecost, and five thousand a few days after. Now let eight thousand souls in this great metropolis be alive to a sense of salvation, and let every man and woman among the eight thousand think they have not done a day's work unless they have attempted to convert a soul, unless they have entered a house, and made a direct attack upon some poor sinner who had lived in sin, and had let fall the battering-ram of truth against the wall of their prejudices; what a different scene would London present if individuals in the church of Christ were only active in proportion to apostolic

and primitive times! This is the great thing we want, and what this Society attempts to supply. The Spirit was poured out to furnish men with a right spirit; the Spirit of God in those days was intended, not simply to convert men to God, but to furnish them with a right spirit to bring their neighbours to a knowledge of Jesus Christ and his salvation: and the Spirit is ready to be poured out *now*. There is no limitation except the limitation of unbelief and scanty prayer. If there were more prayer and more faith, there would be more exertion, and more success.

Now what was the spirit these men had? I will just briefly tell you.

The influence of the divine spirit of God on the minds of the apostles and the primitive preachers produced three blessed states of mind. *Burning zeal for their Master's glory*: this was one. They went into "every house:" not only those into which they were invited, but into "every house," of the rich as well as of the poor; of the learned as well as the illiterate. And *what* though it was said, "You have no business here; keep your religion to yourself?" They had too much love for their brethren to care for the frowns of men whose souls they attempted to bless: their Master's honour was what they attempted to sustain: and if men blasphemed, and dishonoured them, they bound the scorn to their brow, and gloried in their shame.

They had *ardent love for the souls of men*. Many among them were rich—others were learned; some were very respectable in their professions: and what did they do? Why they all of them united together: and see them apportioning out Jerusalem, making districts of the holy city, and saying, "Now you have influence in that quarter: go and tell those people of a Saviour's dying love. You are better fitted for that district: go and tell your friends the Saviour there." O! this love that burned in their spirits, and melted them into tender compassion for the souls of men—this love made them daring. conscious that they sought their Master's honour, and conscious that they sought the salvation of men, they feared no rebuke, but entered into every house, and ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.

I am not aware, and can hardly suppose, that there are any of the preaching agents of this Society present. If I had I would to encourage that dear young man who is engaged in this work, say to him, 'If you have never read the life of Joseph Alleine (who wrote the "Alarm to the Unconverted") read it. We are told that that man of God, notwithstanding the cruel persecution which he suffered, although his name was scoffed at and despised in Taunton, the place where he led souls to the Saviour, used to go and knock at the doors of the inhabitants, and though the servants would frequently shut it in his face, he would knock again, and say, "Pray, do let me in; I have a message to your master, and only wish to converse with him." Sometimes the servants would not let him in; then he would go the next day taking a little present in his hand, a book, or something to gain admission: and when he could once gain admission, it was seldom that the enmity of the people was not slain by the power of his love and his kindness to them. O dear young man, do not be afraid of a rebuff; you have a soul to save: do not be afraid of scorn; you have to gather souls to Christ: and though you be despised and reproached, yet count it all joy when you fall into these divers tribulations, if you may but win souls to the dear Redeemer.

'In every house they ceased not to teach and to preach:" here is *indefatig-*

*gable perseverance in their work.* God hath sworn that Christ should be “a light to lighten the Gentiles,” and that the earth should be filled with his glory. That was enough for them. Though every thing seemed to oppose them—though they were scorned and laughed at—though they were severed from their families and cut off from their comforts, it was enough for them to persevere in their work, that God had sworn with an oath that every sinner should listen to the sound of his voice, and multitudes be gathered to his name. And so they persevered in their work; they taught publicly, and from house to house.

Now, my dear hearers, I have endeavoured to explain to you the doctrinal part of the subject, and to illustrate it in your presence this evening. All perhaps who hear me have been privileged to sit under the Gospel ministry; many who hear me, in addition to the public alarms of the ministers of the Gospel, have had the prayers, the counsel, the advice, and the exhortation of fathers and mothers, of brothers and sisters, of relations and friends. I ask you whether you are the better for hearing the Gospel. Has it reformed your minds? Has it renewed your nature? Has it brought you to Christ as penitent, humble, broken-hearted sinners? Has it taken you away from bad company? Has it dissociated you from evil practices? Has it enabled you to cast yourselves on the mercy of the Saviour of sinners? I beseech you do not put away this question from you—it is for your life. Strange events frequently happen, and mysterious providences occur. You may never hear the voice of the preacher again, and the preacher may never be permitted to preach any more. I seem to-night, beloved, to stand on the brink of eternity while I am preaching to you. Every one of you may drop into eternity before the morning light, and the preacher may be summoned to his Master's bar before that light comes. Let me then seriously ask you, Has the preaching of Christ done you good? Has it converted your souls? Has it renewed your minds? Has it brought you to love communion with God? Has it made a change in your views, and feelings, and prospects, and pleasures, and habits? Has it indeed made you a new creature in Christ Jesus? Suppose my Master were to come from heaven at this very moment, and begin at the first in this assembly, and go all round the house, and put the question to every individual here—*Lovest thou me? Lovest thou me? Lovest thou me? Lovest thou me?* What would you say? What! not love Christ who came from heaven to save sinners, who died the just for the unjust, to bring sinners to God, and who ever lives to make intercession for sinners? What! not love Christ? Well then, if you die in that state, if you die enemies to him, this is what is pronounced upon you—they are not my words, dear hearers; they are God's words: “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema, Maranatha”—let him be devoted to destruction till the Lord shall come. Awful thought! Young man, you are gay and foolish now. Young man, you may have come from your mother's arms perhaps to this great metropolis. Alas! she bade you depart with many blessings, praying that God would keep you in this city. She said, “God be merciful to my child: let him be the partaker of his heavenly grace.” Is the prayer answered? You, young woman, are away perhaps from the ken of your father's and your mother's eye; you are now gay, and careless, and thoughtless and now dress and company are your chief engagements. **There is a day coming**

when they will not cheer you—when all your friends and your pleasures will be like thorns in your sides and goads in your hearts. “Cursed be my companions,” you will say, “that drew me from the house of God, and from a Saviour’s love! Cursed be the pleasures that drowned my peace, and destroyed my soul!” Come, then, to Christ to-night; his open arms are spread wide to receive you. If you have a heart sensible of your necessities and your sins, be it known to you that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. I leave you with this prayer—a prayer which was offered by one soul, as it is recorded, and received mercy: may it be offered by many, and receive mercy to-night. “Lord, save my poor soul!” Take this prayer home, and put him to the test of his love and faithfulness: and who can tell but you shall become the partakers of his eternal power and his eternal grace?

But many of you are the happy partakers of this precious Gospel: many of you have received it in the love and in the power of it. It has often attended you in your domestic comforts: it has given you many mercies, many blessings, of which you would never have partaken without it. Now I ask you to-night, and I intend to have, if God will give you his Spirit, a response to the question—I ask you, dear hearers, will you for your Master’s sake send the Gospel which has so blessed you to save your perishing fellow mortals? Will you let your neighbours die and perish in their sins without making any attempt to save them? I pity you if you will: but I am satisfied you will not. I need not state to you the objects of this Society: it is simply by the means of salaried agents to publish the Gospel of Christ in all parts of the metropolis where access can be obtained. It is to raise up an aggressive system of warfare against the kingdom of Satan, and to convert souls to God. This is its plain, simple, and scriptural object. I am happy to tell you that forty agents are now employed in this work of mercy: and if it were not trespassing too much on your time I would read a letter which my beloved friend Mr. Broadfoot has written to the secretary of the Society respecting the character of the agents. He tells us that the lengthened interviews he had with all of them, it was his endeavour, by conversation or examination, or both, to form as correct an estimate as he could of their spiritual condition and mental furniture; and though as to talents and acquirements, they are, as might be expected, greatly diversified, it affords him much pleasure to state that he believes them all to be persons of fervent piety, of holy affection, and devout zeal to the glory of the Redeemer, and the best interests of their fellow-men. Such a testimony, I hope, will have sufficient weight with you.

I have heard one objection to the society—that it employs *salaried agents*. But then this is apostolical. It is said that all Christians should be engaged in the work of the Lord. True, my brethren; every Christian should be a missionary: and that is the foundation of this society, and the principle on which it works. But still you recollect that all the rich men among the people that were converted in apostolic days, sold their lands and their estates, and distributed to those who had need; and all these were deeply interested in the progress of the Gospel.

I have a letter, sent to me before I began preaching, which I will read. “Rev. Sir—Those who are desirous of gaining happiness may do so by supporting this cause of the City Mission. It has already repaid more than this world is worth. You are in possession of facts as to the **great good which the**

Society has done, which when they are brought before the people they will find themselves not provided with sufficient money to discharge their debt of gratitude to the Lord. Therefore let them have the luxury which I have had. I promise to pay to the City Mission two and sixpence a month. I have a box, and I am happy to say there are twenty shillings in it, given in one week. The operations of the Society are directed to the *poor*: I pray God they may even be directed to the abodes of the rich. O may God send down his Spirit upon the people this night!" I should not have read the letter to you, but as it is without a name, and encloses the first contribution, I thought it would be an encouragement to persons present to do so.

I shall make no more statements, but commend the Society to your contributions. If you know the value of the Gospel, I doubt not but the preciousness of its truths will enable you to do that which is right in God's sight, just to your neighbours, and instrumental to your own soul. May God give you the spirit of liberality and the spirit of love this evening! Amen.



## JESUS WASHING HIS DISCIPLES' FEET

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REV. C. BENSON, A.M.

ST. MARY-LE-STRAND, MAY 22, 1836\*.

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“So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.”—JOHN, xiii. 12—15.

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AMONG the various incidents which are recorded by the evangelist as having occurred during the night which immediately preceded the crucifixion of our Lord, there is not one which is introduced with more particular solemnity than the washing of the apostles' feet, “Now before the feast of the passover,” says St. John, “when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” Such is the impressive manner in which the evangelist brings before our consideration this simple action of our Saviour; and such the minute particularity with which he describes the circumstances that accompanied it.

Nor is this all. We may remark, as equally singular, the importance which our Lord himself appears to have attached to the transaction; and the mysterious language which he addressed to Peter, when he would have resisted in his own case the performance of the rite. Now when Jesus came to Peter for the purpose of washing him, “Peter said to him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.” Struck with the extraordinary solemnity, and the apparent mystery of this whole transaction, and pressed by the difficulty of explaining it satisfactorily upon the mere supposition of its being intended to give an example of Christian humility in its ordinary sense, individuals have

\* On behalf of the District Visiting Society.

endeavoured to raise the act itself to a degree of importance commensurate with the dignity with which it is introduced.

Some have therefore conceived, that the Saviour intended the ceremony of washing the apostles' feet to be regarded as emblematical of his cleansing the souls and bodies of his disciples from all sin, by the washing of that mingled water and blood which flowed from his side when it was poured out for transgression upon the cross. This opinion is principally supported by the conversation which has been already quoted as having taken place between our Lord and St. Peter. Now it is clear that the only light in which Jesus himself has taught us to look on the incident, is as a motive to go and do likewise: "I have given you" says he, "an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." This, at least, is the only instruction he has openly delivered; and it shews, upon a careful review, that the whole circumstances of the case may be satisfactorily explained, without having recourse to any mystical allusion to his own propitiatory sacrifice. Jesus came, as we have seen, to Peter, and Peter, knowing both his own unworthiness and his Master's divine dignity said unto him, "Dost thou wash my feet?" That is, "Is it meet that an office of such degradation should be performed by the everlasting Son of God to one of the lowliest of the sons of men?" "Jesus answered and said, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. As yet thou art ignorant of the reasons which have induced me to adopt this course; but as soon as I have done what it is my purpose to do, then shalt thou be made acquainted with the cause." Not satisfied to submit, or not aware of our Lord's meaning, Peter still more vehemently replied, "Thou shalt never wash my feet: Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." In other words; "If, in disobedience to my expressed will, thou refusest to permit me to do that which I desire to do, and wilt not, without a previous explanation of the reason of my conduct, bend to my authority and be washed, thy presumption and disobedience too plainly shew that thou hast no part in me in that submissive dispensation in which I have ever been ready to follow the will of my heavenly Father, which thou, as my disciple, ought ever to be ready to follow mine."

Struck by this rebuke, St. Peter passed at once from obstinacy to excess of zeal, and said unto his Lord, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." "He that is already cleansed, whether from the filthiness of the flesh or the spirit, does not require for the end that I have now in view, to submit to more from me than the washing of his feet; for by his previous cleansing he is already purified. Obey, therefore, in what I desire, and give me an opportunity of doing neither more nor less to thee than that which my own wisdom sees meet."

It is evident, then, that there is nothing in the statement of our Lord to his apostles which may not be explained without allusion to the efficacy of his blood in purging and washing away the sins of all mankind. Such a secret and mystical reasoning is unnecessary to elucidate the language of Jesus. As it is, therefore, a needless, so is it also an unnatural course to assume such a mystical reference, in order to account for the circumstances under which, in the particular case of the text, the washing of the apostles' feet was performed.

But though we have thus explained the conversation between our Lord and St. Peter, it still remains to us to assign some reasons for that great solemnity with which the narrative is introduced to our notice by St. John. To account for this, then, there are some who would persuade us, that the mere act of washing the disciples' feet was intended to be an everlasting ordinance in the Christian church. As the Lord's supper was ordained to be celebrated in continual remembrance of Christ, so do they maintain that this act of wisdom should also be done in perpetual imitation of Christ. They imagine, that to give greater weight to the duty, the most awful period of our Saviour's life, even the night before he was crucified, was chosen for its institution, as well as for that of the great sacrament of the Gospel. In pursuance of this notion, the prelates and great men of the Roman church, are accustomed, year by year, in the week in which they commemorate the death of the Redeemer, to repeat the act of washing the feet of the poor, when they vainly suppose, that by that outward deed alone they have accomplished all that is necessary to the fulfilment of the precept of Christ, by doing to others as he himself did to his disciples. But, surely, such a meagre and limited view of the subject is altogether unworthy of the divine wisdom of our Lord. The sacrament of the Lord's supper, is for the remission of sins; it is an ordinance appointed for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls, even as our bodies are by the bread and wine: but the mere momentary washing a poor brother's feet at a fixed period on each returning year, is utterly vain and valueless, except as an example of that entire and uninterrupted course of kindness which we should shew to all who are placed in the same relative situation to us, in which our blessed Saviour stood to the apostles whom he had chosen. Had this ceremony been performed by the apostles with the same regularity with which they almost daily celebrated the supper of the Lord; had they commended it to the observance of the universal church, or even implied it in their writings, that they deemed it binding in its literal sense, we might have admitted it as a Christian rite. But there is one only allusion to it throughout the whole remainder of the New Testament; and that one in I Timothy, v. 10. It is clear that St. Paul, in describing the good works of the widow he approves, intended under the particular expression of washing the feet of the saints, of designating the general custom of performing the requisite services of hospitality to those Christians whom we receive as guests under our roof.

It remains, therefore, that we reject this modern practice as the unauthorized invention of man, and consider the washing the apostles' feet as a particular instance exemplifying some general virtue. It declares, that herein he has given us an example, that we should do as he had done to his disciples. His conduct is to be, therefore, a model for ours. The same disposition which he exhibited to his followers should be exhibited to our brethren. Acts of a similar nature to perform, and to transfuse the spirit of his conduct on this particular occasion into our own.

What then was the mind which Christ on this particular occasion displayed? and what is the nature of those acts of Christ, of those virtues, which in following his example, when he washed his apostles' feet, we also should be led to perform? In answering this question, it is usually said, that the virtue which this lowly act of our Lord recommends, is that of Christian humility. Humility, it is remarked is the leading characteristic of the Gospel of Christ

the paramount feature of this particular ceremony. It is therefore inferred that this is the grace of which our Saviour meant to signify the beauty and the excellence by his own example. It is, indeed, impossible to deny, that the most admirable humility was, in a high degree, exhibited, when washing the apostles' feet; but so also it was in every portion of our Lord's earthly pilgrimage, and seen more conspicuously when it was inculcated by his ignominious death for us upon the cross; more so, even, than in that ceremony which is now under our review. It is not easy, therefore, if the purpose is merely to recommend the duty of humility, to account for the selection of so simple an act, when it was about to be still more powerfully inculcated by the still more impressive and humiliating sufferings of our Saviour's death. It would rather have been, that some special form and kind of humility was designed to be enjoined, and was, in fact, signified, by the very nature of the act represented under the image of washing the apostles' feet.

Let us examine, then, into the nature of this act, and from that examination let us see if we cannot ascertain the particular species of humility it was intended to recommend, and explain, at the same time, both why it was left to this period, and why it is introduced to our notice with so much of solemn earnestness.

*First*, then, the act of washing the feet was one which in the countries in which our Saviour dwelt was usually performed by servants to their masters, as a point of duty, or by inferiors to superiors as a mark of respect. In the present instance the whole proceeding was reversed. Here the heavenly and almighty Master of the universe performed it for his earthly and dependant servants. Here the Lord, who is above all, God blessed for ever, performed for those who are among the meanest and least esteemed of weak and miserable mortals.

*Secondly*, the washing of the apostles' feet was not an act essential to the supply of their necessary wants, or calculated to relieve any of their urgent distresses, or to remove from them the calamities of sickness or even of death. It is one, which, estimated at the highest, may be said to be no more than a compliance with custom, and contributing to the ordinary comforts of life.

*Thirdly*, it was a personal service by the Lord himself. His works were effected, either by the power of his word, or by the ministry of those whom he sent forth, with a commission to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, and cast out devils in his name. But the washing of the apostles' feet was the work of his own hands; a lowly labour in which he employed his own body, and not the result of the authority with which as Messiah he was endued; but as the strength which he as man received in common with the whole family of Adam.

*Lastly*, the washing of the apostles' feet was not a duty which lay in the usual course of our Saviour's ministry, or to which he was usually called by the character of Redeemer, or Preacher of Righteousness in which he appeared. On the contrary, it was one in which the relative position in which he stood towards his apostles in order to perform. He had to become a servant, instead of prophet, priest, or king. The duty was one which demanded that he should strip himself of his usual raiment, and descend from the tone of his general pre-eminence, to take a lower order and humiliating form before his inferiors, to perform.

Such was the act: and having so noticed and ascertained its nature, we may easily perceive, both what it was intended to inculcate upon us, and why it was deferred to an especial period, and introduced by the solemn preface given to it by St. John. That form of humility which this act so especially commands, is that of personal service performed by superiors to inferiors, and that not merely for the relief of the essential necessities, or the removal of piercing pains, but for their ordinary comforts and conveniences, and advantages in life.

The importance of such lessons is apparent. What are acts of patronage and protection, though they spring from the compassion of the soul? They still mark the pre-eminence of the Christian. Charity and generosity equally shew the superior rank in which we stand towards our brethren; they add almost to the feeling of importance we entertain: they often give us great credit in the world, and they are such that gather round us many friends and suppliants to participate in the bounty we bestow. These are acts, therefore, which it is comparatively easy to perform; more easy than half the other duties of the Christian. For acts of charity and alms-giving are generally done with that degree of moderation and regard to the circumstances in which we stand to the world, that they neither entail upon us diminution of splendour, loss of enjoyment, or even the abatement of a single comfort. But when we are obliged to labour with our own bodily powers for the good of others, when those for whom we labour are our inferiors, when we are called to lay aside our outward marks of distinction, and mingle with these inferiors and dependants, and act to them as their servants; when we are told to minister to them with our own hands, and, in fact, to reverse the relative situations in which we stand to them—and when we do this, not for what is essential to continue their existence but only desirable for their comfort and convenience; then the difficulty arises; then it is that the Christian begins to feel his repugnance to the office of charitable love; then it is that we experience that there is some hardness in the demands of Christ; then it is that we are tempted to shrink, and to trust to others what we are unwilling to undertake ourselves. Most necessary, therefore, was it, that our Lord should give us a pregnant example of his desire, that we should perform such personal service, and in the feeling of humility submit to the action inculcated.

But this is not all. Not only are we unwilling to do such service, but we may add, that such personal services are in fact actions which most of all affect the great principle of charity; I mean, the increase of brotherly love between the various orders of society. The poor think, often (perhaps they justly think), that what is done for them by the rich in alms-giving, is done merely out of that superabundance with which it has pleased God to bless them. They see that it entails upon themselves no loss of luxury, plenty, comfort, or splendour. The poor, therefore, regarding such alms-giving as no sacrifice, as the mere performance of a bounden duty, too often feel little of that gratitude, which the ostentatiously charitable man deems his best reward. But the poor know the value of personal services: they know the value of *labour* given for another's welfare by their own experience, by their own station in life; they can measure the sacrifice which a Christian man, when he descends to work with his own hands for their benefit, or to give the power of his faculties to assist them.

Continually employed in the works of their own hands, they understand well the price of the recompense. They are therefore always much affected by such proceedings towards themselves from whatever quarter it may arise. When they see those who are confessedly superior, placed beyond the necessity of such work, who have all things given them by God which are requisite for themselves, who can descend from this state only from charity, charity in its evangelical sense—when they see that they are cared for and that they are laboured for, by those who lay aside for this very purpose all the outward marks of their superiority—then they can perceive and estimate the extent and difficulty of the sacrifice, and seeing no other motive but love for doing it, return it with a corresponding feeling of unbounded thankfulness. Wherever thankfulness is raised, there also will good be found to those. And thus from personal services like those commended to us by our Saviour's conduct, does the best of all effects to society arise in the cementing of its various orders, in the bonds of concord, unity, and love.

The usefulness, the excellence, and the beauty of that particular form of beneficent humility here set before us for our imitation, and the necessity of so ordering it, are manifest. If we examine further we shall discover, that the period to which it was deferred, and the statement by which it is introduced, are peculiarly calculated to give our Lord's example in this instance an additional weight: "When," says St. John, "Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father," then did he begin to wash the Apostles' feet. At such a moment it might have been supposed, it surely could have raised in us no possible surprise, had Christ in his human nature been almost, if not altogether occupied with the contemplation of his own approaching sufferings, with their necessity for the salvation of a lost world, and their efficacy in regenerating mankind, the result of the final accomplishment of the great purposes of God. But we then see that he was alive, not only to the wants, but even to the comforts of his followers. He did not let his own business come between him and his care for others; but snatched a moment of the best, the most afflicted, and important of his own life to shew his sympathy, and to do what lay in his power to make others feel sympathy for their brethren's happiness.

It was impossible that any period, therefore, could have been chosen more effectually calculated to shew us, that we owe it to the Lord not, even in our deepest distress, to be swallowed up by our own sorrow—not, even at the last period of life, to give up the works of kindness, and tenderness, and regard for the convenience and happiness of those around us. It was his purpose to shew us, that the love of our brother, to have its perfect work, should be manifested even to the end of our days, and even in the most afflicted of the occupied portions of our own existence. Most wisely, therefore, did he defer the example he intended to set before us upon such an important point, to the hour in which his own days were about to end, and he was pressed down with more than common heaviness of soul at the prospect of that contest with the powers of darkness which lay before him, and immediately begun. And if any time could have been taken in the whole course of his ministry more fit than another to impress upon us the paramount regard to do all that we can, even at the sacrifice of what our own circumstances seem to require for ourselves, in order to promote the happiness of our brethren; we cannot doubt

but that that period was, when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he was about, through the means of the cross, to depart to his Father. That was a period when he might have been fully justified in bending his whole powers to prepare his mind against the pains and miseries of his own coming hour; and to see, that having loved his own he loved them to the end. To the end of life, therefore, are we, and all his disciples, called by this his example, to love our brethren in the Lord, the children of the same Almighty Father, redeemed by the same merciful Saviour, and heirs of the same everlasting promise and hope.

The evangelist proceeds: "Supper being ended, the devil, having now put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him," then did he begin, though fully aware of his own disciple's wickedness and hypocrisy, to wash the feet of all his disciples. It was not only, therefore, those who loved him, it was not only, therefore, those who were cleansed from iniquity, because of their sincerity and faith, but it was him also who through covetousness and treachery went to his appointed place, to whom our Lord condescended to perform this act of humble kindness. To enemies, therefore, as well as friends, to those that forget, as well as those that remember God, our consideration is due. It is not their evil which should hinder our doing them good, even in the smallest matter, when it is in our power so to do.

Lastly, the evangelist tells us, that when Jesus began to wash the apostles' feet, he knew that the Father "had given all things into his hand, and that he was come from God, and that he went to God." It was not, therefore, any unconsciousness of his divine dignity, it was not any ignorance of his own incalculable superiority to those with whom he ministered, that led our Lord to the humble office of washing his apostles' feet. At any period of his ministry, such a thought it would be impossible for us to entertain, that he could be ignorant of his divine glory. But the evangelist directs our attention more decidedly to this circumstance of our Saviour's acquaintance with his own divinity and glory at this moment; it impresses upon us more strongly the idea, that there is no imaginable situation which a man can hold in the vast constitution and multiplied varieties of human society, which can emancipate him from an imitation of the example of his Lord on this particular duty of performing the humblest personal services for his brethren's sake. It is impossible but those whom Providence has raised high above others in rank, in wisdom, in talents, or position upon the earth, must be aware of the distinction which separates them in many things from their fellow-creatures. It is even desirable that men should not forget their place in society, because upon their just appreciation of its responsibility depends their knowledge of what it becomes them to perform, and of the various claims which God and man have upon their time their exertions, and their possessions. But high as they may be raised by human distinctions, they can never reach in the faintest degree to that superabundant honour which places the Lord Jesus at an infinite distance above his believing servants. Neither can they even so clearly perceive, or ever so correctly appreciate, their own loftiness above all that is called great or common, as did the Saviour of the world comprehend his own superiority as the Creator of all, above the created. Not all the loftiness of men, not all their distinctions, not all their knowledge, pre-eminence, or dignity, can ever excuse them from the imitation of that virtue, to the imitation of which the example of our Lord washing the apostles' feet was intended to persuade.

We perceive, then, at once, when thus considered and reasoned upon, how wisely the apostle has introduced the incident to our notice by his statement of these various particulars; for, as the incident itself is intended to recommend to us the performance of personal services and lowly services, and services which are calculated to minister, not only to the wants, but to the comforts of our humbler brethren, so are the prefatory remarks and solemnities with which it is brought forward calculated to shew us, that no dignity, however exalted, is raised above the necessity of following this example; that even in the last hours of life, and even in the most busy and troubled moments of existence, still the notice from our Lord is, to attend to the works of charity, and be filled with the feelings of consideration and brotherly love.

The application of the conclusions which are thus drawn from the washing of the disciples' feet by our blessed Lord, appears to be peculiarly adapted to encourage, vindicate, and command those various works of charity, in which the Society for the Promotion and Encouragement of District Visiting is engaged, and upon whose interest we are now assembled this night. What is its design? It is to regard the general systematic visitation of the poor, with a view to the improvement of their temporal and spiritual condition. To accomplish this object, it appeals to all classes—to the clergy as well as the laity—to those who, by station or talent, their influence or piety, their wealth or leisure, are any way raised above their brethren—it calls upon them all to assist in reforming, comforting, relieving, and instructing the poor, the humble and the afflicted, the vile and the impenitent of our land. It calls upon them to compassion, with their own labour, their own strength, their own faculties, vigorously and fervently to do works of charity, both to the bodies and the souls of their poorer brethren. Personal services—the personal services of superiors to inferiors, even of the highest to the lowest, are therefore exactly what this institution, after the example of our Lord, gives to every man a call and an opportunity to perform. Blessed indeed are those who, in the spirit of Christian love, have undertaken this self-denying and humbling, but most useful and important, duty. They truly may be said to fulfil the purpose of the Saviour in washing the apostles' feet, and to set out a pattern to his disciples after them for their imitation. Like him, though in a far less exalted sense and degree, they know that their heavenly Father has given them the good things of the world, and raised them to rank, riches, and privileges, from which their lowly brethren have been, by the dispensation of the same heavenly Father, withdrawn. Yet, like him, they look upon those distinctions, not as given for their own enjoyment or idleness, not as exempting them from the necessity, but as urging upon them the propriety, of making such blessings means of becoming benevolent and useful to those who are around them. Like him, they rise from their sumptuous abodes, they lay aside the garments of their pride and worldly pre-eminence which separates them from the dwellings of the destitute, and gird their faculties and powers with love, and disseminate both mental, moral, religious, and temporal, treasure around them. Like Christ, they undertake a humble and personal service; and to their feelings and sympathies too often a painful service, in visiting the houses, not merely of inferiors, but of the enemies of righteousness and truth, and those that are subject to all the miseries and destitutions of the earth. They have to try too, like him, to win back those who betray the Gospel by iniquity, to a sense of



better and holier things. No matter how mean may be the abode they enter ; no matter how much of their own ease and pleasure they are obliged to forego , no matter how foreign to their habits, how revolting to their delicacy, how harassing to their tenderness, how contrary to all that they are accustomed to behold even now, are the scenes of misery and iniquity through which they must pass. As Christ's servants, after the example of Christ's humility and love, they gird themselves to the task, and fulfil it, after the example of Christ, under the hope of benefitting, either temporally or spiritually, some of the members of Jesus Christ. Without price and without money, save the testimony of their own conscience, the district visitor gives up, for the sake of doing Christian good to the very lowest of mankind, his ease, his business, his superiority, and humbles himself to give advice, assistance, consolation, exhortation, and instruction.

Such are they ; such is the character of their work ; so exactly does it fall within the scope and purpose of what Jesus commanded when he washed his disciples' feet. Surely, my brethren, it is impossible that personal service so disinterested and holy can fail of doing much to remove the ignorant, the degraded, and the destitute, from the darkness and misery of their errors and their vices. Every report, indeed, of the Society assures us, that the fruit is plentiful, according to the circumstances. Families raised from the neglect of all public worship to a continual attendance in the house of God. Individuals who had nothing to employ them, furnished with the means of subsistence by their own industry. Children growing up in ignorance of God, directed to schools, where salvation becomes a sound known and blessed upon their lips. Parents roused and directed to a sense of duties to their children which they had never known before. The poor taught, how their more favoured brethren care for them as brethren in the Lord ; and their more favoured brethren taught, how holy, and happy, and Christian a thing it is, to seek out the poor in knowledge and in wisdom, and feel for them, and communicate to them a portion of the glorious treasures of eternity. Comfort to the needy ; light to the ignorant, peace to the wretched ; good-will among the various orders and degrees of the vast social machinery : these are among the benefits which, in many instances, have followed from the lowly personal services of the district visitor, under the sanction of this Society. Would to God that the vineyard was supplied to overflowing with labourers, then might the work not be long of duration ! But it is not so ; the harvest, even when we confine our view to the limits of this metropolis, are great, but comparatively the labourers are few. The complaint made in various districts still is, that more voluntary visitors are wanting : and the most extraordinary feature of the society, the employment of unpaid, disinterested agents in benefitting the poor, may be lost, if Christ's voice reach not the heart, and his example stir not up Christian workmen to go and do to their brethren as he vouchsafed to do for his disciples. If this be not the case, all the blessings of this Society to the visitors and to the visited is likely to be lost.

I beseech you, therefore, brethren, to meditate upon these things. Consider the station you bear in society ; consider what superiority has been given you and others ; consult with your own hearts ; consider with your own hearts, what are the talents you possess ; talents of wealth too often misapplied ; talents of information too often applied to your own aggrandizement ; talents of leisure

perpetually conceded to gratification and indulgence. By the love of Christ, by the force of his example, by the power of his command, I beseech you consider what it is you owe to your brethren, not only in casting them the crumbs of your own superabundance, but in labouring for their benefit in personal service, by giving to them your example, the works of your hands, the knowledge you possess, the powers of your understanding, and the blessing of your prayers.

Brethren, I do not think that in thus dwelling on the particular view of the object of the Society, and of the services of the voluntary district visitors, that I shall run any risk of lessening your contributions to the wants of the Society this evening. Christian men approve, at least should approve, their beneficence to every object which solicits their benevolence, by the knowledge of their conviction of the excellency of the end to which the Society is directing its energies. If I have persuaded you that this Society is according to the Gospel and example of Christ; if I have set it before you so strongly that you must feel the necessity of such personal service as its visitors are engaged in, in benefitting the ignorant and the poor, I doubt not you will contribute according to that feeling which you have of the excellency of the object to which you are called to contribute, and you will give according to its wants and its exigences. With these considerations I leave that Society wholly in your hands, conscious that what you feel it right to give, you will give: and beseeching you if you cannot give to it, and will not contribute to it the riches of your purse, to do it the still more essential benefit of joining some of those excellent societies which may exist in the neighbourhood in which you dwell, thereby fulfilling the precept of the text, doing after that example which Christ gave to his followers.

## THE CONFESSION OF CHRIST.

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REV. T. DALE, A.M.

ST. BRIDE'S CHURCH, FLEET STREET, JUNE 5, 1836.

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"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."—I JOHN, iv. 15.

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SCRIPTURE is full of condescension to human ignorance, and compassion for human weakness. This may be proved in many ways, and especially by the plain and explicit nature of those tests by which we are engaged or commanded to "examine ourselves whether we are in the faith," to "prove our own selves;" to determine, at any given period, whether, if we live, our prospect of life will be *Christ*, and whether, if we die, our expectation in death will be *gain*.

In order to arrive at a conclusion of such acknowledged and unparalleled importance, there is no need for a long, and painful, and perplexing inquiry—none for an exact and nice equipoise of doctrine—nor yet for a comparison of spiritual truth, with spiritual, which minds untaught and unused to reason might find it difficult to institute or to carry on. All is summed up in the briefest possible compass, and pressed home on the heart with the most pointed and inevitable application. The confession, indeed, to which the apostle has referred, may require to be illustrated; and the benefits consequent thereon may require to be presented in detail: but the facts which result, with which we are all primarily, as well as actually, concerned, are at once decisive—decisive alike to him who does, and to him who does not confess that Jesus is the Son of God. The one dwelleth in God, and God in him; the other dwelleth not without the range of God's vision, nor beyond the reach of God's power (which is impossible), but without the limit that encircles God's chosen, and without that atmosphere of purity into which no moral pollution, no moral harm can penetrate.

Let us, then, on the present occasion, instead of disputing or declining the test, apply it candidly and honestly to ourselves. Let us consider what is included under the significant term, "confessing Jesus to be the Son of God," and then define on scriptural, and consequently, sufficient grounds, whether confessing him aright, we are yet partakers of those benefits which arise from God dwelling in us, and we in God.

First, let us consider THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE TEXT: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God." We have here no vestige of exclusion or limitation; no preference to the Jew on account of his national distinction, no prohibition to the Gentile by reason of his past delinquency.

No one can avail himself of the pretext, "This does not apply to me." Exclusion of system may indeed be supposed by some; but they are all man's fabrication: when God speaks, there are no limitations of promise, and there are no exemptions from duty. This is the language of God: "Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth:" "Go ye and make disciples of all nations:" "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely:" "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Now obvious as this universality may seem, it is not without a purpose without an advantage, and even without a necessity, that we premise it. It brings all within our range—it ensures the attention of all. If God revealed himself only in a systematic manner—a manner to be understood but by sages, philosophers, and divines; if one link after another had been added to form a continuous chain of reasoning, and we were at liberty to try God in each by the rules to which man is subject, and to apply to the acts and expressions of God the conclusions which may be drawn from similar expressions on the part of man; we might then argue, that the very exercise of his mercy derogated from the perfection of his justice; that if he causes some to be saved, he also causes others to be lost; that by the very act of bringing it to some, he bars it to all besides; that by an election of grace, which appears arbitrary and capricious, he reprobates all who are not called, or all who do not obey the call, which amounts to the same thing, when the power from which it proceeds is that by which alone it can be made effectual.

They who need an apology for continuing in sin, hold back from the influence of the promises, on the ground that the promises were not for them, for that if they were, God would make them willing, and if they were not, all their efforts would be in vain. But the heart that would adopt this sentiment, and the lip that has given utterance to it, is confounded by the explicit and decisive language of the text, declaring God's promise, indeed, but not accounting for God's actions, nor developing the principle on which it acts; nay, and not only so, but the downcast and dejected spirit, it might be, prevented, by the depth of its humility, from availing itself of consolation, is revived and encouraged, and assuredly is with language such as this. There is no limitation which excludes him; there cannot be, for the words are of universal application—"Whosoever confesses:" there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all who call upon him. It is indeed added by Paul, with an emphatical simplicity, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost:" but is there conveyed in this the slightest doubt that the Holy Ghost will be given to those who desire to make the confession? Is there the slightest qualification of the promise conveyed by Jesus himself in the first of the affecting appeals to the most endeared of earth's relationship, and universal as the rule is that commended it to our hearts—"If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Ah! brethren, those who are finally shut out (which God grant you may never be!) can never charge their exclusion upon God, so long as it is written, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

We come next to examine THE CONFESSION ITSELF, in which we are all so intimately concerned, and of which, it may be observed, that while it is a con

fession of *words*—for “with the mouth confession is made to salvation”—it is not a confession of words *alone*—for “with the heart” (adds the apostle) “man believes unto righteousness.” and out of the fulness of the heart *alone*, the utterance of a right confession can proceed, while, further, as the actions are controlled and directed by the heart, the confession will be one also of deeds. “Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I command?” was the indignant demand of Jesus to those who confessed him but in name: and equally explicit was his solemn determination—“Then will he say, I never knew you: depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.” We shall therefore determine a true confession to be, that which is not only the utterance of the lip, but which, having its evidence in the actions, has its origin in the heart.

It is true, that in Scripture a bold, and explicit, and resolute avowal of belief in Christ is frequently taken as inclusive of the other two; so that the connexion might appear to a superficial observer more intimate and necessary than we seem disposed to represent it. But this will be sufficiently accounted for when we take into account the difference of circumstances. In the apostolical ages every confession was made, so to speak, within view of the dungeon, and within sound of the scourge: the sword dripping with blood was suspended over the head of every candidate for baptism; and it may be said literally, and without a figure, that he was “baptized by the Holy Ghost, and *with fire*.” Consequently there was no escape for insincerity here: the heart alone could have prompted a confession, by which every thing as to this world was to be lost, and nothing gained—all perils braved, and no present benefit be secured. It must have learned, under divine teaching, to “count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord;” while, moreover, the course of action which such a profession instituted, was in perfect accordance with the feeling from which it was understood to proceed. Duties, however painful and self-denying in themselves, were not then considered, as they seem now to be, optional. Religious services, that more especially which signifies the sufferings and death of Christ—did not require to be enforced by stimulants, but were hailed as enjoyments, and were partaken of as a privilege. Strict abstinence and a total separation from all the sensualities of a gorgeous and luxurious idolatry was essential to communion with the church: and so multiplied were the persecutions to which the servants of the Redeemer were exposed, that the apostle Paul does not scruple to declare that “if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.”

But *now* the confession of Christ with the lip is not only made without peril, but can scarcely be withheld without detriment. In the great majority of cases, a man without religion is looked on with suspicion and distrust. He is one from whom the husband guards his wife, and against whom the father warns his children, and with whom others shrink from holding intercourse. They look on him with caution and reserve, acting instinctively on the conviction, that he who does not profess to fear God can hardly be expected to regard man. A partial religion, therefore—a religion sufficient to quiet the conscience, without any interference with the maxims and customs of the world, is in repute rather than otherwise. And this does no inconsiderable good to society, because it provides for the incorporation into the putrifying mass around us of a certain measure of that Christian principle which is the salt of the earth. Those who openly avow the Gospel with their lips

cannot openly repudiate it in their lives. There is much they are compelled to do, and much they are willing to do; for they feel in ordinary life there is a benefit in self-restraint, in social obligation, in domestic charity—and that all such benefits come by the outward recognition and acknowledgment of the Gospel. In most cases, the happiness, in all, the harmony, in some, even the temporal prosperity, of a family, rests on, and is determined by, the comparative influence of the Gospel principles on its members.

For these and other reasons, a certain profession of religion, so far from being attended with discredit, is in request among us. The man who attends punctually or frequently on religious worship, acquires thereby an entrance to our confidence; we have another security for his present integrity. The confession with the lip is therefore a benefit to society, as it imposes restraints on those who make it. It is a benefit to them, also, because they gain more in this life, even from restraint in others, than they lose from the temptation imposed on themselves. But whether it is a benefit to the soul, a benefit which shall endure when the body has returned to its dust, is to be tried by another standard, and determined on far other principles. There is confession to *man*, who judgeth by the outward appearance; there is confession to *God*, who looketh on the heart. There is a general conviction and confession which is good to its extent; but, after all, it is only the body, of which the true, and earnest, and spiritual confession is the soul. The question is not, therefore, *Do we outwardly* confess Christ to be the Son of God? Our lips have already answered this question, our actions have already attested this fact. The question is really, *How* do we confess him? Confessing him with the lip to be the Son of God, do we utter the conviction of the heart—a conviction arising out of a right estimate of our own characters, necessities, and requisites, out of a full and fixed persuasion that he is the Saviour ordained of God, who can do for us all that we need? Does the demonstration of a doctrine so explicitly laid down in Scripture, that Christ Jesus, uniting the divine nature and the human nature—the divine, because he is God manifest in the flesh—the human, for seeing that the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself also took part of the same—took on him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: does the demonstration of this doctrine, I ask, arise out of this experienced adaptation to the circumstances of our own case? Does the examination of ourselves, made with candour and with earnestness, with desire to learn the truth, and determination to profit by it, make us not only to approve and to admire, but to acknowledge and to adore the wisdom and the goodness of God in thus providing for the eternal welfare of a being so overwhelmed with sin, and so compassed with infirmity, as each of us who looks into himself must know himself to be? In those intervals of thought which will thrust themselves on the most unreflecting, but which are sought and embraced, and improved by those who have acquired a knowledge of the chief end of man: in those intervals when weariness is constraining us to solitude, in the silence of the midnight hour, on the restless couch, in anxiety and pain; when we cannot but feel that we are thankful, and remember that we are immortal; do we recognize the sufficiency of the sacrifice which God hath provided, the stability of that foundation on which alone can be based a firm hope of support in death, and of acquittal in judgment, and of admission to everlasting life? Do we then confess God with the heart, when God alone is

witness to the confession, as comprehending in itself all that can be needed and desired by the conscious transgressor, to whom it is appointed once to die, and after death the judgment? Do we then recognize Christ as made unto us, what he alone can be made, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?" We must, brethren, we must at some time feel our own insignificance in relation to that system of things of which we form a part. When we think of the untold, unnumbered millions who have gone before us into that state of existence of which we know nothing but what the Godhead has declared unto us; when we regard ourselves as atoms of intelligence floating as in a sunbeam in the sight of God's countenance, and that for eternity—whether it shall be a light of glory to gladden, or a fire of indignation to consume; how can we but feel that every such atom is to itself a world—that our eternal salvation absorbs every other interest, just as the focus concentrates all the converging rays of light? It profits us nothing though we gain the whole world, and lose our own souls, while there is no means of saving them but the means ordained in God's word, the true confession of Christ, the confession of the heart.

O! surely this is the way to learn what Christ is, and how we ought to prize his great salvation, when we realize by anticipation, how fearful a thing it will be, to be without him in the hour when we shall need him most, in the hour when none but he will answer to our need! Only let us think of prolonged and hopeless trouble, without Christ as a Comforter; of the conflict and agony of death, without Christ as a Conqueror; of appearing at the judgment-seat of God, without Christ as an Advocate; of entrance on the desolation and dreariness of eternity, without Christ for a portion and inheritance! Only let us think of what must be lost leaving out of the reckoning what must be endured; and O! surely, if we do this, the heart will never rest until those personal convictions and impressions be obtained and embodied which shall enable it also, through the utterance of the lips, to acknowledge by the Holy Ghost, under all the vicissitudes of life, and amid the struggles of dissolution, that Jesus is the Son of God, and manifested for their salvation to be the Son of man.

The confession of the heart necessitates that of which we are lastly to speak—**THE CONFESSION OF THE LIFE.** "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The tongue will speak, the members will act, out of the abundance of the heart: and Christ once formed therein, the conversation will be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ. This test will extend itself to all duties, apply itself to all relations—from God, who claims first, and demands most, and deserves best, down to the casual acquaintance of an hour, whom we never saw till yesterday, and, perhaps, may never see again. Indeed, if we were accumulating evidences of divine revelation, instead of applying a test, whose authority we all acknowledge, I should point to the beneficial influences that follow a confession of Christ—their tendency to develop moral worth, to promote social union, to advance domestic and individual happiness. You have here principles which men, reasoning according to their own judgment, would call inconsistent, and yet tending to their own mark, and leaning to their own practice. For who are the men—I ask without scruple in a mixed congregation—who are the men to whom those around them look for models of righteous dealing, whose word

once passed and pledged, carries with it the solemnity of an oath ; who are distinguished by purity of conversation, which restrains in their presence the profane witticism, the malignant slander, and the indecent jest ? Who are they to whom even the children of this world have recourse for counsel, and, in the hour of calamity, for aid ? Who are they to whom we instinctively turn for help, and sympathy, and support, in all that concerns the welfare of man, and that aims at the glory of God ? Who are they that deny themselves, and constrain themselves, yielding their claims, and foregoing their interests, that they may do good and lend, hoping for nothing again ? Are they those who are wise in their own eyes, and righteous in their own sight—those who think to scale heaven by their works ? No such thing : they are the persons who put not their trust in any thing that they do—who record the evidence against themselves in the church, as poor “ miserable sinners,” and in the world, as “ unprofitable servants ;” who disclaim all confidence in works of righteousness which they have done ; who look for salvation in grace alone ; who confess that Christ is every thing, and that they themselves are nothing, except what Christ has made them. They are lowliest in prayer ; these are loudest in praise. These are the men that mingle in the rapture, and swell the choral hymn of thanksgiving. These are the men from every one of which incense is borne by angels to the throne of the most high God. These are they that will congregate around that altar ; a little flock, indeed, but, still, a flock to whom it is “ the Father’s pleasure to give the kingdom.”

O ! you who thus confess Christ, while you are pledging yourselves to him, whose lives reflect the Gospel, and whose hearts delight themselves in his love (why are we not all such ?)—consider for a few moments the blessing which is above all price, and which is all your own. You confess that Jesus is the Son of God : of each of you, therefore, it may be said, that “ God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” God dwells in you ; and this is, at present, the portion of the blessing which comes immediately into view. Already he dwells in you, but still more hereafter shall you dwell in God. But wherefore doth God dwell in you ? To counsel, to admonish, to defend, to sanctify. His indwelling tends alike to suppress sin and engender holiness ; in other words, in excluding the elements of discord, to obtain and maintain within you the abundance of peace.

Do you ask the evidence of this ? “ Hereby,” saith the apostle, “ we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” But how does the Spirit work ? We answer, In direct opposition to human nature. Resistance to temptation is a sign of the Spirit. Refusal of sinful compromise, or questionable pleasures, is a sign of the Spirit. Struggling with self in performance of duty, is a sign of the Spirit. Concern and expectation in every disastrous occurrence, in every calamitous visitation, to seek comfort from God, is a sign of the Spirit. When temptation is repelled, when the mastery is obtained over sin, when duty has itself become sweet, when we suffer according to the example of our divine Master, whose will was swallowed up in God’s ; such are a few signs of that indwelling of God which will deprive the troubled waters of life of more than half their bitterness. For though God’s people do suffer even as others, and the waters of a full cup are wrung out to them, they never sorrow as those who have no hope. The endurance of the believer is the endurance of hope ; his patience is the confidence of hope : he knows that “ all



things are working together for his good:" he is persuaded that "the chastening, not joyous, but grievous, shall yield in the end the peaceable fruit of righteousness:" he knows that "the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." He is, therefore, like the apostle, both patient and joyful in tribulation: patient, because God dwells in him; and joyful, because, in due season, the trial ended and faith triumphant, he shall dwell with God.

Yes, here is the perfection of the blessing—he "dwelleth in God;" and that with him, so far as it is perceived and realized, is the happiness of life, and shall become an exhaustless source of blessing throughout the ages of an eternity of duration. Dwelling in God, he combines, even here, all the elements of perfect felicity, so far as they are attainable on earth. He is conscious of a life, the very existence of which proves its immortality; and of a hope, the very source of which shall ensure its accomplishment. for it is "a good hope through grace;" and a strength, the character of which certifies victory, for "if God be for us who can be against us?" and a promise which must stand firm though the universe itself gives way. He dwells in God, and "whosoever dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of his wings; no evil shall befall him nor any plague come nigh his dwelling." If evil befall him it shall be overruled for good; and if the plague come near, God shall make it pass away, and leave behind the peaceable fruits of righteousness. He is "not afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flieth at noon-day." He never comes to the throne of God but he finds Christ seated on it as an intercessor, and therefore will not tremble at the last when he shall find Christ seated on it as a judge: for on that very person his iniquity has been laid by whom iniquity will then be tried; it is the Judge who already dwells in him, and who will perfect his own image before the day of reckoning shall arrive, his presence being a pledge of a union that shall endure throughout eternity. A veil now separates between Christ and the believer, but it shall be torn asunder by the hand of death: "We shall then be made like him," said the venerable John, "for we shall see him as he is." O that we could exhibit more of the glories of an indwelling Saviour, that so men might take knowledge of us that God dwells in us and we in God; and that, seeing our good works, they may rejoice in our light, and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

Out of this subject, brethren, prolific and expansive as it is, I have one question to propose, and only one, and it is a question grounded on a fact. You have this day confessed Jesus to be the Son of God; the question is, *How* have you confessed him? Was it with our lips? Yes—all, all confess him either by utterance or by acquiescence, for your presence here is an acquiescence, though your lips are (as they never should be) mute. He, indeed, who should come hither, if there be any such, meaning no act of worship, and only desiring to stand fair with the world, would be no better than a dissembler and a hypocrite. But we hope and we trust that of this generation of vipers Satan himself, did he sift the congregation here present, would not find one. You all, then, confess, with your lips, and we credit you with full sincerity; but, beloved brethren, did you confess him with your *hearts*? Who can answer this question but yourselves? "The heart knoweth its own bitterness; and a stranger does

not intermeddle with his joy." But I ask again of you, brethren—though you only can answer—Did you confess him with your heart? O! mark that answer well! It may prove you on the very brink of hell—it may prove you on the verge of the abyss of despair. Christ not confessed by *the heart* is not confessed *at all*.

But, lastly, Do you confess him in your *lives*, in your *walk*, in your *actions*? In other words, Do you confess him at home, in the world, in the church, at the altar? Do not, we entreat you, credit yourselves with confessing Christ at the full until you confess him *there*. You may doubt, and you may fear, and you may excuse, and you may dissemble, but only ask yourselves (the reason, the propriety of these questions you cannot doubt) only ask yourselves Can that man who shrinks from the altar be fit for heaven? Can that man expect Christ to dwell with him who does not seek to dwell with Christ. Can we arraign that sentence in the day of retribution which on every sacramental sabbath we tacitly pass on ourselves.

It only remains that I bid welcome to those young disciples who have within the last few days avowed themselves soldiers and servants of Christ, and who are about to seal their allegiance at the altar for the first time this day—who are about to confess Christ as Christ himself ordained; and thus, we hope and believe, to lay for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. We welcome them to the little flock (God be praised, it is an increasing flock); we greet them as fellow-citizens with the saints, and with the house of God; as members of the family of love, united, not for time alone, but eternity, by the only tie which death cannot dissolve. We welcome them to peace, to holiness, to hope, to joy. They choose the good path, and it shall not be taken from them: they secure to themselves true riches, which shall never make to themselves wings and fly away. They place themselves behind a shield that none can penetrate: they have a refuge and defence that none can force. They marshal themselves under the Captain of salvation who has brought many sons, and will bring them also, to glory. Let temptation come; they remember Christ and they are prepared: let trouble come; they remember Christ, and they are prepared: let death come; they remember Christ, and still they are prepared. They do shew forth the Lord's death till he come; and whether he come quickly to give the judgment, or whether they go early to receive it, certain it is, that, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven." O then, put all the world's vanities into one scale, and the benefits, transient and eternal of the confession into the other; and never, my brethren, dearly-beloved and longed-for, my joy and crown, as I trust you will one day be—never will you repent what you are about to do this day. It will bring upon you, and it will leave upon you (O, that this might be the portion of all I address!) the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.

## THE HEAVENLY INHERITANCE.

“**CONSIDER** only the nature and the blessedness of such a prospect; and see whether it is not likely to be an influential motive to holiness, and for gratitude towards God. You are placed here but for a short and uncertain period; and if you supposed, that while here your lot were the happiest ever enjoyed by mortals, still, all you possess is transitory—all you do is defiled—all you love and enjoy is perpetually fading from you. The most durable of your possessions cannot be secured to you, even for the day that passeth over you. The morning sun sees you rejoicing in your abundance: the evening sun may behold you destitute and impoverished. The year opens upon you surrounded by an affectionate family, closely united to loving relatives: it closes upon you cheerless and bereft of all the gladdening joys of the present life. Such, even as to temporal things, is the Christian’s life here below. And with respect to spiritual things, they are almost equally unsatisfactory. A few hours of holy meditation, and the world returns again with its unceasing demands, and must and will be attended to. A few moments of intimate communion with God, and wandering thoughts, or sinful imaginations come in among us, and remind us that we are still possessors of an unholy nature—that we are carrying about a body of sin and death with us—that the good which we would we do not, and that the evil which we would not, that we do.

“Now turn your eyes from what you are, to what you shall be—from what you now possess, to that which is promised you hereafter. An inheritance is placed before you in which every thing is entirely the reverse of all that we have just stated; in which the enjoyment is declared, by the unerring word of God, to be eternal—for it is an inheritance incorruptible: no taint of sin shall ever pass upon it—for it is an inheritance undefiled: no change shall ever interrupt or diminish the happiness of it—for it is an inheritance that fadeth not away. No sound of sorrow shall ever be heard within those blissful abodes. The wealth laid up in store for you in those imperishable garner shall never be exhausted. The friends you knew on earth who have entered there, shall go no more out for ever; they are in their Father’s house, rejoicing in their Redeemer’s presence, and beholding his glory. How delightful is the thought, how glorious the anticipation, that not a person whom we have loved on earth, if a real child of God, shall be absent from our future inheritance—not a joy in which as Christians we appear delighted, that we shall not find awaiting us, but perfectly purified, and unspeakably magnified, in our Redeemer’s kingdom. That is indeed worthy the name of an inheritance where all are heirs, and yet where nothing is divided; but where each shall enjoy an abundance of which no mortal tongue can tell the extent—where our communion with God shall not be momentary, but perpetual—where our union with the Redeemer shall be of a nature so certain and unquestionable, that it shall form the one great subject of our thanksgiving, the one great crowning joy of all our joys throughout eternity—where our intercourse shall be unchequered by those sinful differences, those selfish jealousies, those unholy suspicions, those unchristian coldnesses, which mar the happiest state of Christian fellowship on earth—where all shall be loved equally, and each desire above all other happiness, the increase of each other’s joy, and the advancement of each other’s honour, as tending in

the same proportion to the increase of their own gratification, and to the extension of their Redeemer's glory.

"Such is a faint and imperfect—alas, how faint and imperfect!—such is a faint and imperfect view of that blissful inheritance for which the Apostle bleaseth God the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"But there is yet one peculiar feature, which to every true and obedient believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, must yield, while in this world, a ten-fold joy. It is, says the Apostle, an inheritance reserved 'for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation:' that is, in other words, **THIS GLORIOUS INHERITANCE IS KEPT FOR YOU, AND YOU ARE KEPT FOR IT.** Here is a boundless motive for gratitude, the one substantial ground for present peace—not that there is, in some far distant and far happier clime, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, to which you might by some possibility attain, but of which you can possess no comfortable assurance below. Would this be comfort? It might be in your minds a certain undefinable longing for something which appeared desirable when opposed to the comparative worthlessness of all in which your hands are engaged, or for which your hearts are striving; but it would not yield the peace which can defy the world and its impositions, the flesh and its temptations, the devil and his threats. But here is something which can, and will, and blessed be God, daily and hourly, to the humble follower of our Lord and Saviour, does bestow a peace of mind and consolation which can defy all these, and places their possessors in a state where they shall never prevail.

"There are times when you—I speak now to those, and to those only, who are enabled to thank God that he has begotten them again unto this lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—who are conscious of this change of heart, and of this change of life, of which we have been speaking—there are times when you may feel doubtful whether you shall ever arrive at the one great object of your hope and of all your prayers—an inheritance into the kingdom and joy of our Lord. Now, my brethren, at such moments call to mind the declarations of the text, and see whether it will not turn your silence into thanksgiving, your heaviness into joy. The revealed word of God declares, that the inheritance is reserved for you, and that you are reserved for it. The word that expresses this is in the original a very peculiar word; it is that which is used for those who are kept by a constant guard; so that it implies the Christian is never left alone, or unguarded on the road to his inheritance—that you have a defence perpetually before you, and behind you, and around you, through which your spiritual enemies can never break, and from which they shall never force you. Your strength and your security do not depend upon yourselves; they depend upon your position. The weakest woman, the youngest child, when placed in a well-garrisoned and ably-defended fortress, may smile at the hostile army without, though thousands and tens of thousands were encamped around the walls. And is not the Christian thus situated who knows something of this security, when he has realized the truth of the declaration, 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe?' Most blessed privilege! You are going to an inheritance which shall never fail; and you are placed in a fortress which can never be taken—kept by a guard which cannot be overcome."

REV. H. BLUNT A.M.

## THE PRAYER OF JABEZ.

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REV. T. BINNEY,

KING'S WEIGH HOUSE CHAPEL, LONDON BRIDGE, JUNE 12, 1836

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And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."—1 CHRON. iv. 9, 10.

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MANY comparisons have at times been instituted, and I think not altogether without reason, between this book as the work of God, the production of God, and the world as the production of God; such, for instance, as that what is necessary and essential lies amply upon the surface of both; that what is necessary for the life that now is is given upon the surface of our earth; and also that what is necessary for the spiritual life of the man within him, all essential, necessary truth, is plain enough upon the surface of Scripture. While it may be interesting to dive into the philosophy and rationale of either; while it may be interesting to one man to investigate the philosophy of vegetation, though he must just eat and live like the rest of men; so while it may be interesting for another to go into the rationale of the philosophy of the facts and the system of revelation, yet he must eat and live spiritually with the simplicity of faith, like the simplest and the most ignorant of men.

Analogies have sometimes been gathered from the mixture that there is in Scripture in the developments of the character of God; sometimes all that is awful, and sometimes all that is bland and benignant. So in the material world there is the same mixture in the development and display of the divine character and perfections. Sometimes again an analogy, not I think altogether fanciful, has been supposed to exist between this Book and the world, in that there are some parts of it that seem luxuriant and beautiful—some parts of the book in which every verse and every word is like a flower springing up under your feet, or like the shade of beautiful vegetation around you, or like an exhibition of the magnificence and loveliness of vegetable nature; while other parts appear sterile and barren, with rocks on every side, with nothing but rudeness, nothing to delight the eye or the taste, nothing to interest; just as there is the same diversity in the scenery of nature.

Now these analogies were strongly impressed on my mind when I looked on these two pages, a part of one of which is to supply us with a passage for our meditation this morning. When we look at this barren catalogue of names, when we look at what is here presented, we seem to have got into one of those

parts of Scripture, in which there is very little to delight the eye or to refresh the heart, just as sometimes we may be passing through some sterile part in the scenery of this world.

But, my brethren, you may carry the analogy further. What are these exhibitions; what is suggested in our mind by what we see in some of these rude and barren spots of nature? Why, just this—that we there get a view of the rocks, of the bands and the pillars of our earth, that bind it and keep it together, and make it what it is, and which are essential and necessary for the support of all the earth, and the soil by which is supported and displayed in other parts the beauty and sublimity of vegetation. So it is here; these parts of the Bible are just representations to us of some of those barren rocks, you may say, but still those rocks which run throughout Scripture, those genealogies which are connected with all that is important in the history of the Messiah and the fulfilment of prophecy; which are like those seams and bands upon our earth, the rocks which bind the whole fabric together, and which support those parts which form the beauty and the magnificence of the whole.

And just as when passing through some bare, and barren, and rocky valley upon the world, you may meet with some beautiful little spot of green and gushing vegetation, which is all the more beautiful for the circumstances in which it is found, beautiful in itself and beautiful in the comparison with the surrounding sterility; just so it is here with these two verses, embedded amidst this dry catalogue of genealogies. “And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.”

Now upon this passage let me just suggest here a very few observations, first explanatory and illustrative of the passage, and then some of the general lessons that may be suggested by it.

In looking at the passage and in suggesting two or three explanatory or illustrative remarks, we observe that with respect to this Jabez we really know nothing but what is combined in these two verses; there is no reference to him in any other part of Scripture. He just comes upon us here, and appears detained as it were by the hand of the Spirit of inspiration for a moment, that we may glance at him and pass away. Almost like Melchizedec as he comes before us in sacred history, without father and without mother, and without beginning of days and end of life, he is passing before us. He was unquestionably, I suppose, from the position in which he stands, of the tribe of Judah; as this is the genealogy of Judah. We know not precisely from the passage who were his parents; what particular line in Judah he belonged to: nor can we exactly make out the precise time in which he lived; though it appears to me the passage gives us a little light on that subject. It is said generally of him, that he “was more honourable than his brethren.” That may or may not imply censure against his brethren. He might be honourable among the honourable; he might be distinguished amongst the distinguished; he might be great among the great. The probability is, however, that it does rather convey the idea of imperfection and defect in the character of surrounding

society, and of those with whom he was immediately connected: and hence it does mark more prominently the influence of principle and of piety in him.

But man may be honourable on various accounts: generally at the time to which the Scripture refers, and now, men are estimated honourable for valour, for wisdom, and for piety. I think it is very probable that all these met in Jabez. There are traditions among the Jews respecting him; and they make him to have been a man distinguished for *wisdom* as a teacher; distinguished as the founder of a school, and having around him a multitude of disciples. This opinion has upon it, perhaps, some air of probability from the last verse of the second chapter in this book, in which it is said, "And the families of the scribes which dwelt at Jabez," or "*with Jabez*;" "the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and Suchathites. These are the Kenites that came of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab." Now, "the families of the scribes which dwelt at Jabez," supposing it to be the name of a place, refers to men who are devoted to study: if it be the name of the persons that dwelt with him, still the same idea seems suggested. So that I think it very probable that the idea of the Jews is right. They themselves take these words which are here used, and in which these different divisions of scribes are distinguished, as being significant, expressing certain qualities of these disciples with respect to the manner in which they receive the instruction of the master, and the manner in which they were devoted to God. It is very probable, therefore, that he was distinguished and honourable for his mental acquisitions and his wisdom.

It seems to me that he was honourable also for his *enterprise* and *activity*, and perhaps also for his valour, because he prays for the enlargement of his coast. Now it strikes me that this particular prayer of Jabez about the enlargement of his coast, and God being with him, and so on—that God's hand, the emblem of power, might be with him in his enlargement—seems to cast a little light on the time in which he lived. It strikes me that he lived soon after the settlement of the people in Canaan, and before they had taken complete and full possession of the different lots. And there was among many of the people a sort of reluctance to do this, a want of vigour and enterprise of mind and character, so that when they sat down in a place there they rested satisfied, and did not go up into the land to possess it; or when they took possession of their particular lots they were not enough anxious to extend themselves, to take possession fully of the coast which God had given them: so that Joshua really had to reprove them for sitting down contented too soon, and saying, "Why a few of you have got possession; yet there remains a number of places that are not yet divided: why sit you here? Arise, take possession." And so with respect not only to the whole people, but with respect to particular parts of the people, there was a want of valour and enterprise in entering on the possession of the inheritance. It strikes me, therefore, this prayer has relation to that, and that he was more honourable than his brethren, because he entered into the mind of God. He desired the strength and power of God to assist him, to enable him to go and root out the inhabitants, and take possession of the enlarged coast, in which he might have ample room for the enjoyment and the development of the blessings of Providence.

Whatever may be thought of that, that he was honourable for his *piety* is, I think, manifest. "He was more honourable than his brethren:" and the sacred writer, after having stated that generally, in the next verse develops

the principle of this honourable character: "And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."

Now in looking at this, as an intimation of the honourable character of the man on account of his piety, whatever may be thought of the other principles we have referred to, you may dwell upon such suggestions as the following.

On looking at this prayer you observe *the propriety of the feeling which it is addressed to God*. "Jabez called upon the God of Israel," marking his intelligent appreciation of the covenant relation which God sustained to his people: that he was neither lost in the vagueness of mere theism, nor led astray by the grossness of idolatry: that he did not merely present his supplications to the being denominated *God* with a vagueness and ignorance of the way by which he was to be approached, and of the precise character by which he was to be addressed, and that he did not depart from those ideas of the supreme God, and bow himself down to idols, as the generality of the people with whom he was connected were in the habit of doing; but that he *understood* and *felt* the principle of the economy under which he lived; that he rejoiced in the privileges and advantages which God in covenant had conferred on the people, and that he rejoiced to look at God in that aspect, and presented his prayer to him in that covenant relation.

It is thus that you and I must come to God; it is thus that we must be prepared not to lose ourselves in the vagueness of sentimentalism and the generalities of religion; but to feel that there is a way by which we are to come, a specific view we are to have of God, a particular and appointed medium through which we must approach, and that the God of the Bible has revealed, in the person of Jesus Christ, his glory set forth in the work of the great high priest; that he is the only God, and that to him we must come in the way pointed out in the Scriptures of truth.

Then let us look at *the comprehensiveness of the prayer*; how much it includes with respect to the life that now is, and the life that is to come—with respect to temporal and spiritual things (for it includes both): "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me." He was asking with respect to *temporal* matters that he might be blessed in them, bringing his peculiar circumstances and condition, and presenting them to God. He was asking, he felt, what was agreeable to the mind and will of God in this matter. But he did not stop there; he would not have been satisfied to have had all this enlargement of coast, this communication of secular and temporal blessing; and therefore it is beautifully added, "and that thou wouldest keep me from evil," from sin, from idolatry; from sin in all its forms; that he might neither grieve God nor offend his Spirit, and bring evil and grief on himself.

Then I think you may observe *the humility* that marks the prayer; how completely he is emptied of self, now he goes out of self, feeling that all his resources must be in God: "That Thou wouldest bless me, that Thou wouldest enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil." There is a feeling pervading every petition and every expression, marking the consciousness that he had of his own weakness



and his own danger: that he needed to be held and sustained by God; that with respect to temporal matters, it was God that must "teach his hands to war and his fingers to fight;" that it was God that must give him strength to advance on his adversary, and it was he that must give him power and strength to get wealth, and that every blessing was from him; that with respect to spiritual matters he must be kept preserved, shielded, and defended, by the protection and power of God around him, that he might not fall into evil nor depart from God.

Then you may observe the *intenseness*, the *ferour*, and the *earnestness*, which seem to mark this supplication. "Oh that thou wouldest bless me *indeed!*" There is something expressive in that of intense feeling, of piety of mind, resting on God. It indicates how deeply he felt his need of the divine mercy—that every other thing might be possessed without this. Therefore he desired this with earnestness, he desired God to "bless him *indeed*"—emphatically, continually, daily, and for ever.

Then observe the *fulfilment* of the prayer: "And God granted him that which he requested." How beautifully and simply it is thus put before us! That he thus became, so to speak, honourable in fact. He had given to him that which he requested: and therefore his coast *was* enlarged; he *was* distinguished; he *was* conspicuous; he *was* kept from evil, and had the honour and glory therefore put upon him which God had promised to put on his saints. He was honourable in fact, and it was thus proved and indicated, that there was a principle lying at the base of his character, of true honour in the sight of God; that what he sought was agreeable to the divine will; that he sought it in the way of the divine appointment; and that there was the principle of piety and faith pervading his feelings, and forming the basis of the attributes of his character.

Such is a brief illustration of what is here stated with respect to this distinguished man, and the prayer that is here recorded of him.

Before I pass on to the more general lessons to be drawn from this prayer, I cannot help just observing *how short this prayer is—how comprehensive*. And this is a characteristic of the prayers of Scripture: the prayers of Scripture are almost all *brief*; many of them are *very* brief. I suppose the longest—Solomon's, or Daniel's, or Nehemiah's—may be read over deliberately and slowly in ten or fifteen minutes, probably in much less. The most of them that are scattered throughout the Scriptures are very brief; but they are *comprehensive*: they involve much; there is an *intenseness* of feeling and a *comprehensiveness* of expression. And it would become us, both in public and in private, thus to gather up our hearts—to have our feelings united, and with brevity, but with *comprehensive earnestness*, to present our petitions to God; so that we might attain to the Scriptural rule of our Master, not so to speak as though we supposed we should be heard for our much speaking.

But I pass on to make one or two general observations arising from the subject.

I should think it very likely that *Jabez owed a good deal of his religion to his mother*, though it is not indicated here whether she lived; or, whether, like Rachael, she died, calling her son as she departed, *Ben-oni*, "the son of my sorrow:" though it is not indicated whether this was the case with the mother of Jabez or not, (it might not be—we suppose it was not;) that she

remembered her affliction, and perpetuated it in the name which she gave to her child; and she remembered along with that, the manifestations of tenderness, the mercy, and the kindness of God: and this might lead her to look on that son with constant, religious, grateful, devout associations; and it might lead her to present a thank-offering, an offering of prayer, which the son thus learnt to present for himself, that he might be "kept from evil, that it might not grieve him." As it were dwelling upon the very name she had given him: "The son of my sorrow:" keep him from evil, that he may not become the son of sorrow indeed, that it may not grieve him—till the child caught the tone and the feeling, the principle and the desire, and perpetuated this prayer here, that he might be kept from evil, that it might not grieve him. I should think it very likely that he owed much to the influence of the prayers of his mother, and the deep devotional feeling that was fixed in his heart of the remembrance of his mother's sorrow. O ye mothers, ye are not sufficiently aware of the moral influence which you have, and how you may impress your own image upon your children by your constant intercourse with them—the constant influence you are exerting upon them by your prayers, your examples, and your pious instruction. The world and the church alike owes much to the mothers of our race: they have given sages to the world; they have given saints to the church; they have given many of the blessed to heaven. Let parents all feel the importance and the responsibility of the parental relation, and the great influence which they may exert upon the formation of the principles and the character of their offspring.

We learn also, that *piety towards God, the possession of the principles and the manifestation of scriptural religion, is in the sight of God essential to the possession of a true and honourable character.* The terms "honourable," and "honourable character," have very different senses among men. That which is highly approved among men in this respect is often an abomination in the sight of God. There is many a man distinguished by this epithet in society, that is loathed in the society of heaven, and by those who take just views of character, and who look at the principles of that character. A merely honourable character in society, means often nothing but a man of integrity. He is honourable so far, in the relations of common life, and his intercourse with man. Some men are *very* honourable, feel very much of principle. Under the influence of their principle, they are led to pay debts which they have contracted by vice, but to starve and to crush the honest tradesman, and neglect to pay other debts which they have accumulated upon themselves. And yet they are "honourable men!" Such are the perversions abroad in the world, and the absurdities in society. But I would have you to remember, that there may be all the principles of integrity, all the principles of true secular honour in the character, and yet there may be wanting the principle that makes a character honourable in the sight of God—the principle of integrity towards Him, paying debts to Him, giving him that heart which is his due, and those affections that he claims, devoting ourselves to Him, and coming to Him in the way and through the medium that he has appointed for the approach of his children.

Another thought is impressed on us by the passage: *the importance that God attaches to faith and piety, and the character that flows from it.* The importance that God attaches to it is proved by the very circumstance of there

being this abrupt introduction of the character of Jabez, in the midst of this dry genealogical detail. It reminds one of a similar passage in Gen. v., in which the same idea is illustrated, where there is a similar catalogue of names, verse after verse, just the repetition of the same words with respect to two different individuals—that they lived, that they begat sons and daughters, and that they died; and so the passage goes on for a great number of verses; until the writer pitches upon the name of Enoch; and there there is an additional idea introduced, that “Enoch walked with God;” impressing a glory and distinction upon the character of the man, and making it stand out prominently from the midst of those with which it is connected. And so here there is just the same representation, that we may mark the importance which God attaches to this character, when he arrested the pen of the scribe, as he was advancing through this dry detail, made a pause and detained the name of Jabez, gave a description of his character and marked it out as an object of devout meditation, setting it before us as a model for our resemblance.

Now, my brethren, if your genealogies were made out, would the scribe have to pause at your name? Is there any thing about you of this character and these principles, that in a similar scroll or writing to this, there may be this reason to pause and to dwell upon you? Your genealogies *are* written: if they are not written on earth, if you cannot take your parchment and shew generation after generation of men from whom you have descended, and if the line will not go on, and be carried forward to distant posterity, your genealogies are written in the mind of God, in that book which ever lies before the eye of God; and he sees whether there is any thing in the principles of your character to detain, so to speak, his eye, and to draw down the complacency of that eye, in looking at any part or particle of his own image in you.

Another thing which you may draw from this subject is, *the possibility of the combination of secular enterprise and activity with eminent piety*. I think these seem to be indicated as having met in the character of Jabez. This piety towards God; his faith, his devotion, the time that he gave for prayer, did not render it impossible with him to give time to active duty. Perhaps, so to speak, he had a sanctified ambition, to combine both activity and enterprise with religion. And my brethren, both these may be combined—diligence in business with fervour of spirit, activity in the fulfilment of the duties of every day life, in connexion with the cultivation of those principles and feelings which keep us near to God, and which sanctify the activity and direct it. In fact, the man who is sluggish and indolent about his secular duties, will very likely be sluggish and dead in the other too. A man's mind may be actively employed with respect to the duties of secular life, and he will be safe if his heart is kept with all diligence: the heart—the heart! With Jabez, I doubt not, that every secular blessing he received, every success, every enlargement of his coast, only deepened his piety; and he felt, doubtless, that he increased his influence and his ability to serve God. And that is the way that it ought to be with you.

Now I think it is likely that Jabez was a young man when this prayer was offered; that there was this formation of his character comparatively early; that he thus started in life, that he thus acted. We therefore recommend it to young men, that they should thus combine activity and enterprise in the duties of life, with devoted and consecrated piety to the service of God. I do not

know but that I am wrong in defending great activity about business; for I know you do not want to be encouraged to that; the danger is all on the other side: there is plenty of enterprise; plenty of attention to business in a city like this: we have to dread that. Very few men in this great city have to complain of their powers and their principles in business: very few of them are chargeable with that sort of infidelity, which consists in neglecting to provide for themselves and their own household. I wish that this activity were sanctified in another way.

I met with the case of a young man the other day that I should like to recommend to your imitation. "Nathaniel Ripley Cogg displayed the character of a Christian merchant, in all its varieties of excellence. He was born November the 3d, 1798; after several weeks of debility he expired May 22d. 1834, in the thirty-sixth year of his age"—just a young man. "He was one of the few noble-hearted men of wealth, whose affluence is constantly proved by their munificence. Yet it was not always from what is strictly denominated affluence that he was benevolent, inasmuch as a vow of God was upon him, that he would never become rich: and he redeemed the holy pledge that he had given, by consecrating his gains to the Lord. In November, 1821, he drew up the following remarkable document: 'By the grace of God I will never be worth more than fifty thousand dollars. By the grace of God I will give one-fourth of the net profits of my business to charitable and religious uses. If I am ever worth twenty thousand dollars, I will give one-half of my net profits: if I am ever worth thirty thousand dollars, I will give three-fourths: and the whole after fifty thousand dollars. So help me God, or give to a more faithful steward, and set me aside.' He adhered to this covenant with conscientious fidelity. At one time finding that his property had increased beyond fifty thousand"—for God blessed him, and granted him that which he requested, if he ever requested secular success—"finding that his property had increased beyond fifty thousand dollars, he at once devoted the surplus, fifteen thousand dollars, as the foundation for a professorship in the Newton institution, to which on various occasions during his short life, he gave at least twice that amount." (It is said that Jabez founded a school or a college.) "Though a Baptist, and ever ready to perform any service for the church and the denomination to which he belonged, yet he was prompt to aid all whose designs might appear to have claim upon him as a Christian. He was a generous friend to many young men, whom he assisted in establishing themselves in business. Seldom was this excellent man absent from any meetings of the church even amidst the greatest pressure of business"—uniting the principles to which I refer. "He rejoiced in the conversion of sinners, and constantly aided his pastor in the important duty. His temper was pliant, his manners affable, his integrity entire. He was distinguished by great business talents, and by acute penetration into the character of men. Energy and activity were his element. We could willingly transcribe his diary before us: but a very few short sentences uttered in his last illness must suffice. 'Within the last few days I have had some glorious views of heaven. It is indeed a glorious thing to die'"—(a young man, of the age of thirty-six, prosperous, successful, happy, with his wife and his little ones, God blessing him in every way!—"It is indeed a glorious thing to die: I have been active and busy in the world; I have enjoyed it as much as any one. God has prospered me; I have every thing to tie me here: I ar

happy in my family : I have property enough ; but how small and mean does this world appear when we are on a sick bed ! Nothing can equal my enjoyment in the near prospect of heaven. My hope in Christ is worth infinitely more than all other things. The blood of Christ ; the blood of Christ ; none but Christ !—and thus he died.” This man of business, this man that was active and busy in the world ; a man of enterprise, enjoying it as much as any one ; having this success in his pursuits—it was thus that his heart was kept warm by his habitual intercourse with heaven ; and thus that God honoured him by his communication of joy and peace when he came to be taken away from that world in which he had moved so much, and which by the grace of God he had used so well. “ By the grace of God I determine that I will never be rich :” such was the language of Mr. Cogg ; that he would devote his property to God. So that you see he did not go on accumulating, and accumulating, and accumulating, and waiting for the mature respectability of advanced life, to give something of his time, and talents, and property to God. Why, if this man had determined to be very useful when he came to be fifty or sixty, he never would have been useful at all ; for he died at thirty-six.

“ Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast ; but keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.” Unite activity and enterprise with devotedness to God. I should like to see some noble-minded spiritual merchants, like the one I just read to you of, that should rise up, and after providing fully and fairly for themselves and their families, still to go on with their activity and enterprise, devoting all after to God : then the world would be converted, and nations would be born, and the church would go forth in her strength, and all would be given that is requisite for the fulfilment of his purposes.

Another remark we make is this, that certainly one of the best ways to preserve your speculations, your pursuits, your secular activity, and enterprise, from being offensive to God and injurious to yourselves, is *to enter upon none, and to engage in none, but such as you can bring, like Jabez, and lay at the footstool of the throne of God, and ask God to bless.* All your enterprise and activity, and speculations, let them be such as you can look at, in the light of the sanctuary and God’s countenance ; and which you can lay down before God at his feet, and ask for his hand to be with you, and his power to go with you, to give you success. What a prayer that would be to ask of God, to bless fraud, to bless a contemplated act of speculation ! Suppose any man should say “ Bless my usual habit of depreciating beyond the truth, and beyond what I know to be the truth, every thing I wish to purchase ; and elevating by my language far above what I know to be the truth every thing I wish to dispose of :” or any other of the petty vices which enter much into the commerce of the world. Now only fancy a man taking all this, and asking God to bless it ! O how it would bring the heart and the head to look keenly, and narrowly, and conscientiously, at what we do, if we were in the habit, like Jabez, of bringing the thing to God !

But it seems to me the prayer would be just as bad, if the man were to say “ O Lord, bless me, O Lord, enlarge my coast ; O Lord, increase and give me secular success, in order that I might rob thee, that I might keep back thy property, and offend and grieve thy Spirit.” Now that is a bad prayer. Is it not the prayer of many professors, think you ? It is. We are shocked when

we think of a man asking for the blessing of God upon the robbery of man ; but we do not shrink and shudder when we think of a man habitually asking strength of God to be enabled to rob God ; and yet wherever there is the prayer for secular success, in connexion with the keeping back of what belongs to God, that is virtually the prayer as I have given it in words ; I only translate the feeling, and the principle, and the character, of the man.

It is not wrong, I would observe again, as I think appears from this passage, to ask for temporal mercies and blessings as well as spiritual. And it is not wrong to pray to be kept from sin, because of its pernicious effects upon ourselves : because I think that Jabez does both these ; and they are both placed here by the pen of inspiration. He authorizes our praying for temporal things : our Saviour does the same in his prayer. The prayer of Jabez authorizes us to pray to be kept from sin, not merely from the abstract feeling of what it is, in the sight of God, but he allows the feelings of the man, the natural feelings of the heart to come in ; and he allows us to pray to be kept from sin, on account of what we know to be its pernicious and painful consequences to ourselves : "Keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me." O there is something beautiful and touching about that. It may mean, and does I dare say mean, all the forms in which sin is pernicious, and all the forms of pain that it brings after it. But to a Christian man, to a devout man, it is the feeling of unutterable grief and of deep pain and sorrow of heart on account of sin. It grieves him that he should thus have offended God, acted unworthily of his relationship, and what he has enjoyed of God's grace, and what he has possessed of God's service. It is like the tender representation of the review which the Spirit of God takes of his people ; that he is grieved, and has sorrow of heart, on account of the inconsistencies of his children.

You may erect upon this another principle—that *sin in the long run is always a miscalculation*. It may be sweet in the month, but its effects are bitter. It is a momentary impression, a mere vapid satisfaction ; but it will sting like a serpent, and bite like an adder. And there is not merely grief, not merely the grief at present, and the painful effects on the heart and mind now, but there is the loss of the soul, the damnation of hell, the grief that is to be felt through the weeping, and the wailing, and the gnashing of teeth there. Have you ever thought what it is for a soul to be lost ? Men and brethren, have you ever thought of what it is for the soul to be lost—lost, damned, cast away by God, as an unclean and polluted thing, and left to that pollution ; lost to life, knowledge, joy, and holiness ; lost to the prospect of the hope of mercy, the expectation of recovery and restoration to God ? O, have you ever tried to realize what it is ? "What can a man give in exchange for his soul ?" This is the miscalculation of sin. If a man should gain the whole world and lose that, what can be given in exchange ? "Keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me : " that I may not lose myself, and lose all, for the sake of a momentary gratification.

In the last place, let us learn from this subject *the gratitude that we ought to feel for the clear discovery that we have in Scripture, of God's covenant relation to his children ; that we can go to him, not merely as the God of Israel, but the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in him reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to men their trespasses. Let us rejoice that we know, far more clearly than Jabez, with knowledge far more ample and exact, that*

we know, that, even if we have taken sin to our bosom, if we have called our enemy our friend, if it hath stung us and grieved us—that we know there is a way by which the grief can be allayed, there is a way by which the sting can be extracted, there is a way by which the poison can be extracted; there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; there is a way by which God himself will comfort us, and take away the cause of grief out of the heart, and put in its place the peace and joy that passeth all understanding. Let us rejoice that we know by the light and the glory of God, and the peace of Jesus Christ, how we may come to him, devote ourselves to him, cast ourselves upon his mercy, and repose upon his strength, and thus being guarded spiritually by the might and the power of God, can go up spiritually, and take our possession, and have our coasts enlarged, our knowledge increased, our sanctification advanced; the enemies within, one by one, expelled and destroyed, until we shall be fitted and perfected for taking possession of the Canaan above, the eternal inheritance of the saints in light. We know this, or ought to know it: may our knowledge become powerful, and active, and transforming, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

## THE SAVIOUR'S CHARACTER, LIFE, AND DEATH.

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REV. W. JAY,

SURREY CHAPEL, JUNE 7, 1829.

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“ Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”—MATTHEW, xx. 28.

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THESE words are the continuation and conclusion of a paragraph, which it will be necessary for us to bring to your notice. It regards the request of Zebedee's children. Nothing is said on this occasion of the father or husband: he might have been dead; he might have been absent; he might have been otherwise minded. We are going to indulge in no illiberal or invidious reflections; but it is well known that the maternal heart is too easily accessible to the emotions of children; and a female heart too much alive to the distinctions of rank. “ Then came the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.” And these two sons were John and James. We have reason to fear the motion originated with them, though it was to be proposed by the mother; and if so, it is humiliating in the extreme, that after all the education ~~JESUS~~ had given them, his disciples should have been such dull scholars, as yet to think his kingdom was of this world; that he was come to deliver them from the Roman yoke, to place them at the head of the nations, and to lead them forth conquering and to conquer; and that in this secular empire, as in all others, there would be degrees of power and glory; and in desiring the chief places for themselves, they betrayed not only their ignorance, but their carnality, their pride, their ambition. “ The best of men are but men at the best.” “ But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to



give his life a ransom for many." Thus our Saviour not only rejects their motion, but seizes an opportunity to inform them concerning the end for which he entered our world, and by which they were to regulate their expectations and their lives. It regards three things—his character, his life, and his death. It shows us his condescension in life, his grace in death; in the one he was a servant, in the other a sacrifice.

How would it delight me, could I persuade myself that these thoughts would be received by very many this morning, who can say with Paul, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and who can pray with Watts,

"Be thou my pattern; make me bear  
More of thy gracious image here:  
Then God, the Judge, shall own my name,  
Among the followers of the Lamb."

These reflections will enable me to conduct you to the table of your dying Lord; and they will be by no means unsuitable to the season which reminds us of the dispensation of the Spirit; for this is the result of his death, and, therefore, the apostle says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

The testimony of our Saviour first regards HIS CHARACTER: *the Son of man*. This perhaps is not peculiar to the New Testament; at least, David speaks of "the Son of man whom God hath made strong for himself." This *probably* alludes to the Messiah. Daniel speaks of "one like the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven." This *certainly* refers to the Messiah. But you will find the expression constantly in the four Gospels; and it is used there, you will remark, not by the four evangelists, but always by himself; and must be in the recollection of many of you, how frequently, how constantly he called himself "the Son of man." The enemies of his divinity would avail themselves of this; but it is to very little purpose. There would be, indeed, some force in the objection they derive from hence, if we did not allow that he is really a partaker of human nature, and that his deity is not invalidated by admitting this. But hear what Isaiah says concerning him: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." And, says the evangelist, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Here are things spoken of him which are certainly not true of him as man, and here are things spoken of him as God. How then is this difficulty to be solved? Why only by this—that there are the divine and the human natures conjoined in his wonderful person. How often did he give intimations of his divinity? *First*, by proclaiming himself always the subject of his ministry; and though he was meek and lowly in heart, yet always preaching himself. "*I am the bread of life:*" "*I am the light of the world:*" "*No man cometh to the Father but by*

me:" "I am the resurrection and the life." And *secondly*, by his claimance of attributes peculiar to Deity; as, for instance, with regard to one (and one is enough, for if he be possessed of *one* attribute peculiar to Deity, he must possess *all*) as to his *omnipotence*: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And, *thirdly*, by suffering others to ascribe the same perfections to him, and allowing himself to be adored and worshipped without rebuking the adorers and the worshippers.

This being premised, we can bring forward two very satisfactory reasons why he was accustomed to call himself the Son of man. The *first* is, because he would gradually develop himself. This aim continued with him even to the end. Just before he was leaving this world to go to the Father, he said to them, "I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself:" he will not be the Author of a new dispensation, but will confirm and establish mine: "but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you." And the *other* is, because our concern with him principally lies in his assuming human nature. Where is the soul that was ever awakened to reflection, but would say with Dr. Watts,

"Till God in human flesh I see,  
My thoughts no comfort find."

And, therefore, the apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, says, "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." You see, he makes the incarnation of the Saviour the very medium of our salvation; and so it is, and every view of it will convince us of the necessity of it. Being a man, as our teacher, his terror does not make us afraid. Being a man, he becomes our complete example, which he could not have been if he had been God only; for how, as God only, could he have been our example? How could he have gone before us with regard to all that impulse, and reverence, and obedience, and tenderness, and suffering, which we see in his character? And yet how much of our religion is connected with all this? Being man, he can gain our confidence, and be able to sympathize with us in our distresses, which he could not have done as God only. "In that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Being man, he could become perfect through suffering, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, which he could not have done as God only.

The second part of his testimony regards HIS LIFE—"the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." There is something in this that fills us, at first, with astonishment. When we consider his grandeur, when we consider the place from which he descended, for he came down from heaven, when we consider the honour, and glory, and homage he enjoyed there, it is natural for us to conclude, that when he enters our earth, he will be welcomed in a manner becoming his dignity; that he will have numerous attendants who will be all ready to run and fly at his nod, and to anticipate all his wishes,

But what says the fact? "He was in the world, and the world knew him not. He came to his own, and his own received him not." When a king visits a part of his dominions, or when he enters the house of one of his subjects, what an ado is there; what exertions and sacrifices are made! When a man rises a little above his fellow-creatures, when he ascends a little in the world, he must always encumber himself by a number of servants, and employ others to do that for him which God has given him hands enough to do for himself. The thing is, man must be great; and as he is not so *really*, and cannot be so really, he must be so *in appearance*. It is worthy of observation, that titles, and a thousand other things that are supposed to indicate greatness, are really and only founded on a want of it, for if men were sufficient without these, all these would be unnecessary. But, alas! poor little man cannot work without these, cannot govern without these; and thus the shadow of greatness is called in to supply the place of the reality. Why does a female ever paint? Because the colours she lays on are to be substituted for the tints nature has denied her. Our Saviour could derive nothing from external appendages. What could any of these distinctions have added to a king who opened the eyes of the blind, raised the dead, calmed the sea in a moment—a being who, by a word, could make worlds, and before whose look the heavens and earth flee away? He could, therefore, dispense with all these things: and though he knew how much they were valued and idolized in our world, and that persons are very much estimated according to them, yet he would dispense with them: "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

We read—God bless their memories—we read of women, who "ministered to him of their substance," and their names are recorded in the book of life, and wheresoever the Gospel is preached, that which they did shall be told for a memorial of them. One of these was Mary Magdalene; another was the wife of Herod's steward. But, alas! this very ministering unto him was a part of his humiliation. How reduced must he have been to stand in need of the assistance and succour of the very creatures of his power. O, when will his reproached followers remember that he was "a worm, and no man," and "a reproach among the people?" When will his poor followers remember, that while foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, he had not where to lay his head? He assumed no state, and required no waiting upon. We only read of his riding once in his life, and then it was upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass: all his other travels were on foot. And many a stray step did he take for us: he went about doing good; and not only seized opportunities when they *offered*, but *sought after them* when they did not present themselves. And, for this purpose, how often did he refuse himself needful refreshment, and give up the enjoyment of the sweets of retirement. See him in the house of Lazarus: he lamented that he had given so much trouble: he commended Mary, who sat at his feet to hear his words, while he kindly reprov'd Martha for her being cumbered about much serving to indulge an appetite which he never did indulge; for he came to feed, not to be fed; he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

Now, there are persons who will often dispense with the attendance of others on themselves, who are not willing themselves to attend upon others, and especially those who are below them. But what do we see yonder? Jesus rises from supper, and lays aside his garments, and takes a towel, and girds himself

After that he pours water into a basin, and begins to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel, wherewith he was girded; and he said, "Know you, my disciples, what I have done? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye ought also to wash one another's feet." Not as to the *action*, but as to the *principle* of the action—this we are to seek after. Jesus came to minister. He may be considered the servant; and there was never a servant yet in the world that was so attentive to the calls of his Master as our Lord was ready to the calls of his. Here a centurion has a servant sick of the palsy—the word is a *slave*: he addresses him on his behalf: immediately he says, "I will come and heal him." Behold the Lord of lords and the King of kings, marching off at a moment's notice, and passing through the mansion to a hinder apartment, and standing by the pallet of a poor diseased slave: "I will come and heal him."

There is a large class of mankind who are commonly trampled upon or overlooked by those around them—they are *the poor*. But he at once said, Enrich their minds and relieve their bodies. He had compassion on the multitude because they had nothing to eat, he had compassion on the multitude "because they were as sheep having no shepherd;" and he taught them many things, and the poor had the Gospel preached unto them. We talk of *woe*: we should compare notes. Here is a woman following a funeral. It was her own son, and her only son; and she too was a widow. Already she had entombed her husband, whose grave was now to be re-opened to awaken all her tears, to receive the remains of one who was her last prop struck from under her. Our Saviour "saw her, and had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he said unto the young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And"—O, what a present!—"he delivered him to his mother."

We talk of *anguish*—can any thing heal the pangs of a guilty mind, or the accusation of a distressed and wounded conscience? Here is a woman who has been taken in adultery. By the law of Moses she was condemned to be stoned. She is mercilessly turned over to our Saviour by a company of wretches, every one of whom was guilty of the very same crime, though they had as yet escaped detection. When our Saviour said, "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her," O, they were convicted in their own consciences, and they began to retire, treading on each other's heels, lest he should lay open their villainy before they could withdraw. And when they were gone, and he saw the woman only, he said, "Woman, where are thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more." On another occasion he dined in the house of a Pharisee. While he was there, a woman in the city, that was a sinner, knowing that Jesus was there, came and ashamed, and afraid to look him in the face, got behind him, and stood at his feet weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and to wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment. What said our Saviour to her? "Thy sins are forgiven thee." The Pharisee murmured: "Never mind him," says he; "Woman, I say unto thee, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

What is the proper use which we ought to make of this part of our subject? It would be an abuse of it, if you were to run down, in consequence of it, the

distinctions of life; for the Scripture always countenances these distinctions, and enforces the various duties arising from them, and not only the social welfare, but the individual welfare of man requires the maintenance of them; and one of the remarks I have made in my passage through this life, is this: That nothing is ever to be gained by breaking down the conditions of men. Let them always be decently and firmly maintained. By weakening them, you do no good to those below them, any more than to those above them.

But there are two uses to which we should apply these representations. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." The *first* is, to admire his condescension. Condescension must be judged by the previous dignity of the being who stoops. What a stoop, indeed! How well may we exclaim, when we think of it, "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" O, Christian, "you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, for your sakes became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be made rich."

The *second* is, not only to admire, but to resemble him therein. God forbid that ever we should consider him, as some do, a mere example. He is infinitely more than an example; and "he that saith, he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked." And here is the advantage now of our evangelical system—while we proclaim him to be our sacrifice, our righteousness, our strength, our God, yet we are at liberty to speak of him as an example. We, therefore, say, Look at him, and learn, and learn how to live, and learn how to die. Look at him, and "be followers of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." This is what the apostle has enjoined upon the Philippians: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And what was this mind? We may learn from what goes immediately before: "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than himself. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." But we learn still more from what follows: "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."

Are those who wear his name, then, seeking great things for themselves? and are they fond of distinction, fond of fine dress, fond of extravagance, in furniture, and at the table? Do they refuse to condescend to men of low birth? Are they the followers of him who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister? Are they haughty and disdainful in their deportment? Would they refuse to perform an humble office for a fellow creature, or a fellow Christian, when Providence placed it in their way? Yes, alas! there are many such. Yes, there are those who give a little of their substance, but who never visit the fatherless and the widows in their afflictions. There are those who buy garments for the poor, but never would they make them, as Dorcas did: we read of the alms-deeds which she did; and alms-deeds are a thousand times superior to alms-giving.

But we must go on to the third part of the testimony, which Jesus has given concerning himself: this regards HIS DEATH. "And to give his life a ransom for many." He did much in life—he did more in death. If the corn of wheat abideth alone, and is not sown, it does not produce; but if it is sown and die,

it brings forth much fruit. This Jesus said in allusion to his own death; and it is designed to remind us of the numberless influences and advantages derived from it. There are some who think we dwell too much and too frequently upon the dying of the Lord Jesus, whereas this is the centre of every thing in the Christian religion. The apostles bore about in their bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus; and they determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

What does he say concerning his death himself? He mentions four things.

The first is, the notion in which he will have us *consider him as a ransom*. This is one of the favourite terms of the Holy Ghost. We will readily concede that it is a metaphorical expression; but, then, it is founded in truth. There is a reality in it, and a reality infinitely surpassing the emblem. What is a ransom? A ransom is a satisfaction or a compensation for release from bondage. Like every thing else in the Christian dispensation, it reminds us of what we were, of the state in which we were; we were the people of the world; we were the slaves of sin; we were led captive by the devil at his will; the lowness and wretchedness of the state of bondage in which we were, are inexpressible, inconceivable. Some of you have known a little of it, and but a little, because, blessed be his name, you were delivered before you had suffered it all, and the larger part of you before you could enter the place towards which you were rapidly hastening; he interposed, and said, "Deliver them from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom." What was this ransom? Had you been only rescued from your former condition, it would have been a delivery only, not a redemption. A redemption supposes a price: you were bought with a price: and what was this price? "You were not redeemed," says Peter, "with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ." This was the ransom, "a price, all price beyond:" a price to which nothing can be added; compared to which, says the Christian, of all his external advantages and deeds, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

It is obvious, from this part of our subject, that Christ did not die for our good only, but he died in our stead; he died in our place; he was our substitute; he "bore our sins in his own body on the tree," for he had none of his own to bear. He, the just, died for us, the unjust. "Surely," says the church, "he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Now the Socinians have often said, when speaking against the doctrine of the atonement, that there is not one word to be found in any of our Saviour's discourses concerning it, during his personal ministry; but if there had not been, he amply brought forward every thing that was necessary to be known concerning him, by the communication of his own Spirit immediately after his death, who led his disciples into all truth, and enabled them to publish it and record it for the use of the church in all ages. But the remark is founded either in falsehood or ignorance. He never said any thing himself concerning his atonement? What did he say when he was administering his own supper? "This cup is the New Testament in my blood which was shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins." And what said he in our text? "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many."

Secondly, he tells us that *his death was intentional*; not an eventual thing

but foreknown; not a consequence, but a design. He assumed our nature, not to reign in it, but to suffer, and on purpose to suffer; "because the children were partakers of flesh he likewise himself took part of the same; that by death he might destroy him that had power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage." You clearly see from his words here, what was his intention; he came not to "be ministered unto, but to minister," and on purpose, for this very end—this was his grand aim and business—"to give his life a ransom for many."

Thirdly, he reminds us also that it was *a voluntary death*; "He gave himself a ransom for many." There are some who speak of Christ's death as if he had not been at his own disposal. It is true there is a Scriptural sense in which he was commissioned: and therefore he sometimes said that he was sent of the Father. But that he was at his own disposal is undeniable. Therefore the Scriptures sometimes ascribe his death to his love: "He loved us, and gave himself for us." And sometimes it is ascribed to his power; "No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down myself: I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." It is very remarkable that here in the very place where he speaks of his commission he asserts his own independence. And as to the commission which he received of the Father, this he voluntarily accomplished; it was not forced upon him; and therefore he said, "That the world may know I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment even so I do. Arise let us go hence." Therefore he said, Lo, I come—I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my heart." "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." I wish you were all willing to receive the blessings he procured by his blood-shedding as he was ready to procure them for you, you would then all withdraw this morning rejoicing in him as the God of your salvation.

Lastly, it regards the *personal esteem he has for his people*. Sometimes they are described by their character, here by their number—many. He does not tell us how many, and he has almost forbidden us to inquire concerning it; for when a man one day asked him, "Lord, are there few that be saved? he said to them" (that is, to the persons that were with him; for he would not deign to notice the poor trifler at all, he would not reply to him;) he took advantage of the question, and said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able." As much as if he had said, Instead of indulging yourselves in various inquiries concerning the number of the saved, do you be concerned to be one of them, and remember you will not seek the blessing in vain if you seek it aright, whatever be your condition or circumstances. But we are allowed to say very many; so many to do justice to the promise made to the Messiah, that, all things should fall down before him, and all nations serve him; so many, that when they are gathered out of every country, and nation, and tongue, and people, they will be found a multitude that no man can number; so many, as that the Messiah admits it an ample compensation for all the sufferings he endured; for "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

In conclusion, we here see *where a poor burdowed conscience can alone find*

*relief.* Are you asking under a sense of guilt, "How shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" He hath shown thee, O man, what is good: you have the advantage of hearing the voice that cries, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." And it is this that constitutes the Gospel glad tidings of great joy. It assures you, that the "blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin." And there are those who have made the trial of it, and can therefore speak of its sufficiency from their own experience. By believing, they have entered into rest, they have shown that it has tranquillized their consciences; yea, and not only so, but they even joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they have now received the atonement. Follow their example; apply only to him, and say,

"Jesus, my great high-priest,  
Offered his blood and died;  
My guilty conscience seeks  
No sacrifice beside:  
His powerful blood did once atone,  
And now he pleads before the throne."

Then, secondly, *let the love of God strike your minds.* The monarchs of the earth have often sacrificed the lives of their subjects to the safety of their own; yea, and when their own has not been in danger, they have immolated thousands and millions on the altar of their pride, and vanity, and revenge. Where was one of them ever to be found, who gave his life for the lives of his subjects? But it is said of Jesus, that he shall save the souls of the needy; that precious is their blood in his sight. He said himself, "I give my life for the life of the world." "Herein is love—truly greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friend." Jesus has done this.

"O, for this love, let rocks and hills  
Their lasting silence break;  
And all harmonious human tongues  
Their Saviour's praises speak."

Lastly, if he has ransomed you, *you are not your own.* What a man has purchased surely is his own. If he has purchased you, you have no right in yourselves to any thing you are, or any thing you have; but you belong entirely to him; and what a clear and undeniable claim has he to the whole! It is here he has wooed, and here he has won. It is here he has drawn, and here he binds you with the cords of love, and the bonds of a man. It is, as Cowper says, "a soul redeemed;" and, therefore, passes through the world perpetually singing, "To him that loved us, and washed us in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." And let this be said, not only by your lips, but by your lives; by giving yourselves up to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all your days. One of his commands we are now hastening to perform; and a dear one it is, and enjoined by his dying breath. Who can refuse him any thing? The same night in which he was betrayed, he said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

"Do this, he said, till time shall end,  
In memory of your dying friend;  
Meet at my table and record,  
The love of your departed Lord."



## THE KINDNESS AND CONDESCENSION OF GOD.

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REV. J. STRATTEN,

PADDINGTON CHAPEL, JUNE 19, 1836.

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“ Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.”—PSALM ciii. 1—5.

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“ My God,” say the apostle Paul, “ shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” God supplieth our need very much through the medium of the Holy Scriptures, “ that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works.” Here are doctrines to inform the judgment, to illuminate the mind, to enlarge the boundaries of our knowledge, to multiply our thoughts and our conceptions. Here are precepts to guide us in our way—countless examples to direct us in our journey through life, and promises to support us in our afflictions. And not only is there this variety of experience; every fluctuation of feeling, every diversity of circumstances in the heart of man, in the Holy Scriptures is portrayed, in the Bible you will find a counterpart of. As face answereth to face in a glass, so does the heart of one good man to that of another; in the Bible, the picture is drawn and seen to perfection. If you indeed have darkness and difficulty, for that state of mind, and that condition of things, here are words ready put into your lips which you may use in the presence of God: “ Out of the depths do I cry unto thee, O Lord.” If your feelings are of a mixed character—if there be a conflict between faith and unbelief, between good and evil—if there be a struggle as between light and darkness in the twilight—here again it is represented: “ Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; I shall yet praise him:” and it is as the light of day, bright illumination, the ascendancy of the noon-day sun. If you are full of joy, how may you express that joy in language so appropriate as in the words of David: “ O sing unto the Lord a new song;” “ O be joyful in the Lord all ye lands.” And if you have gratitude rising in your mind, fluttering in your heart, as a young dove in its soft nest—if you have thankfulness, and wish to express it in a lovely song, where can you find any thing come up to the expression of the text, “ Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits— who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender

mercies ; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things ; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

First, God, in his kindness, grace, and condescension, is said to "*forgive all thine iniquities.*" And this supposes that we have iniquities—that we have been defiled by transgressions. David, the author of these words, was a sinner ; he was made sensible of his sin : and it is a very striking account which is given of Nathan coming to him, and by his exquisite parable, bringing the monarch into self-condemnation, convincing him out of his own mouth, and then saying to him, in the energy of the prophet, "Thou art the man." And sensible of his sin, broken-hearted, in the deepest penitence on account of sin, he composed the fifty-first Psalm, bewailing his transgression, supplicating pardon, seeking forgiveness, and presenting himself in the church as a public mourner, publishes his humiliation to all the nations, and to all the church to the end of time. The passage which is now before us may be regarded as the answer to that prayer, as the realization of that hope. David had said, "According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean : wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." God had done for him that which he asked, and now he says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul—who forgiveth all thine iniquities."

I bring the matter to *your* consideration and to *my own*. *We* are sinners in the sight of God. "All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one unto his own way : and the Lord hath laid on Christ the iniquity of us all." We have erred and strayed like lost sheep : we have done the things which we ought not to have done, and we have left undone the things which we ought to have performed : and if we had been in some other places of religious worship and holy devotion this morning, we should have said, over and over again, "Lord have mercy upon us, miserable sinners."

You have sinned in your *hearts*. The heart is pronounced in Scripture to be "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." "You have sinned in your *thoughts*. Would you permit the nearest and most intimate friend which you have under heaven to know every thought that has ever crossed your bosom ? Have you never been invaded by thoughts blasphemous, and by thoughts so sinful, that you have almost looked round upon a sudden to see if the devil were not there ? God sees the secrets of our hearts : but he will blot them out ; he will forgive them. There are sins of our *religious services* : "Woe is me !" says the prophet, "for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips." There are transgressors of the *tongue* : there are words of folly, words of falsehood, words of exaggeration, words of extravagance. There are sins sometimes of *silence*—not only speaking when we ought not, but not speaking when we should. "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar ;" and he laid it upon his lips, and his sinfulness passed away from him. "If any man offend not with his word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." But who can stand up in the presence of God this day, and say "I have never sinned with my tongue ?" There are sins of the *life*—actions, I mean, of unkindness, of ingratitude, of injustice, of inconsideration. Who is in all these points blameless ? Who can affirm, "I am pure ; there is no obliquity in me ?" There are sins in the *relations* of life : there are offences

committed against one another in our respective homes. Is there a husband who has loved his wife as Christ loveth the church? Are the words of Cowper a slander and a lie—

“ The wisest and the happiest pair  
Will find occasions to forbear,  
And something, every day they live,  
To pity, and, perhaps, forgive?”

I come to the lower relations—of the child to the parent, and the parent to the child. Is there a father who has done every thing he ought to have done for his son? Is there a son whom his father has no occasion to chasten? Who is without a speck? Who is without a blemish? There are sins of our *holy things*. I take it for granted that you go into your closets, that you shut to the door, that you pray to your Father who seeth in secret. But *how* is it done? Oft-times with what coldness—in the midst of what vagrancy of imagination; with no consecration of thought, no force of feeling, no vigour of spirituality! You come into the house of God; here you are; it is well you are here; we can say, as Peter did on one occasion, “It is good for us to be here.” *How* do you come? Did you come in the innocency of the angel, in the purity of the seraph? And since you have been in this place, have you worshipped in the beauty of holiness? Have you listened to the word of God, as our first parents listened to their instructor? We are here: is it a scene of perfection? Is it heaven on earth? Is there no guilt even in our services? Is there not a strange intermixture of piety and profanity, of light and darkness, of good and evil? Is there every where upon us the traces and the stains of our fallen humanity? There is no end, if one enters into a detailed narrative, of the sinfulness of man.

But I come to the beauty and glory of the text: “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.” And I beg you to remark that it is “all.” God in this matter is like himself; he does not forgive a part and retain a part; he does not remit the fraction, and keep the pounds against you. A servant owed to his lord ten thousand talents; and forasmuch as he had nothing to pay, he freely forgave him *all*. O noble lord! O blessed servant! God freely forgiveth all; and if all be forgiven, then, of course, there is freedom. Let the vesture be fully washed; let it be deeply and thoroughly cleansed; and it comes back to its primitive whiteness. And so our vesture (if I may venture the image and the similitude) purified by God’s pardoning love to its consummate whiteness, is made to glisten with the light of heaven upon it, like as Christ’s was, of which it is said, it was white as no fuller on earth could whiten it; it was white as snow. If all is purified, then there is no dross left in the midst of the pure gold; it is all glorious, all refulgent, and fit for the purest and most splendid vessels to be laid upon the altar and in the house of God: like the clouds on the face of heaven: look aloft to the topmost, turn to the right and to the left, survey the whole circumference of the horizon; there is no darkness, no mist, no obstruction at all! “Bless the Lord, O my soul, who, after this manner forgiveth all thine iniquities!”

I do not teach the great absurdity, that all men are in a pardoned state: but let there be repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—let the blood of sprinkling be upon a man—let the act of absolution be administered from the courts of heaven, and sealed on a person’s conscience by the Holy

Ghost, and then, I say, that he is pardoned, that all his iniquities are forgiven, and that he ought to rejoice in the light and glory of God. You remember that woman who heard the invitation of Christ to come unto him; and she came, and at the feet of Jesus she stood, and bathed them with her tears, and wiped them with the flowing tresses of her hair; and Jesus said, "Thy sins, which are many, are *all* forgiven thee." You see in Jesus the power and prerogative, in all its splendour and beauty, which forgives; you see in the woman the consummate picture of a penitential and self-emptied mind; you see in the Pharisee the dark, scowling objector to the doctrine; and you see the doctrine in the prevalence of its own power, and in the triumph of its own purity: "Jesus saith, Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities:" *thine*—for we must bring it home, and make it personal. It is matter of gladness to me, that God forgives any man. I delight in every believer's joy: I see him free, and pure, and happy, and I sympathize with him in his gladness. But suppose a man unrenewed, unpardoned, with whom you cannot participate in joy! Bring it home, then; let faith appropriate the blessing; let the sentiment go into the heart; let it sink deep into the conscience; let it thoroughly pervade the spirit: "Who forgiveth thine iniquities:" "who *forgiveth*"—the word is in the present tense; not *did*, not *will*, but who *forgiveth*—is continually in the act, as it were; who will cleanse from all sinfulness of the flesh and of the spirit, and thus perfect holiness in the fear of God.

May I not speak for a moment, not to the pardoned sinner, but to the man who is far from God, and, Cain-like, wandering from his Father in heaven? May I not say, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities."

The next thing God is said to do in this passage, is to "*heal all our diseases.*" I infer from many expressions in this psalm, that David was several times sick, that he was dangerously ill, that his life was in the most imminent juncture, that it just quivered in the balance, and was suspended, as it were, upon a hair. And I ask, if this be not true also of the great majority of men? I would ask, if all of us have not been at seasons in this condition? We remember the wormwood and the gall; we remember the anguish and the humiliation: but the fever left us, and we recovered; the malady was rebuked, and we escaped; the sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God.

There are some, I know, who cannot adopt the language of the text. I have talked with persons who have said, "Sir, I know not what sickness is; I have had health from the beginning unto this day; I was never laid low for a week, nor for one hour." Is this the case with any of you? Then your mercy is signal, your condition is conspicuous: then your voices should overtop all other voices: then your gratitude should transcend; your praises should be superlative; you should say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who hath never permitted me to be sick at all!" There is a great difference between health and sickness. In health, the eye hath its fire, the countenance its bloom, the voice its strength, the foot its elasticity, and the hand its power. You can perform your enterprise; you can eat and drink; you can live and enjoy yourself, be

happy and minister to the happiness of others. If you are sick and laid low, the eye loses its brightness, the countenance its colour, the voice its strength, the foot its elasticity, and the hand its power; and the appetite is gone; you lie down languishing, and say, "I can do nothing, I am weary, I am faint, I am ready to die;" and you need all manner of attention. Is any sick? Let him send for the elders of the church: then is the time for sympathy; then is the season for prayer.

You may not have been sick yourselves. Lives there a person on this earth, is there one within the reach of my voice, who has not had to wait upon those in sickness who are near and tender to him as his own life? How I sympathize with Jairus, "Come, and heal my daughter." O what did that man feel; and what did the mother of the beauteous girl feel, when Jesus restored her safe to her mother; the widow of Nairn, who lost her son, and Martha and Mary their brother! I wonder how they were attended to in the progress of sickness. I knew a person bearing no appearance of tenderness or civility; and he went with his daughters abroad, and one of them was sick; and the physician was sent for, and he said, "Sir, it is a malignant and perilous fever; send instantly for a nurse." "I am the nurse," said the father, and threw off his raiment; and "for seven days and nights," he told me, "I left not the room; the cap of ice I put on myself with my own hands; and *there* is my daughter." Not that in every instance the tenderest sympathy and the kindest care, God heals and gives the restoration. There are other instances in which all is done that can be done, but the daughter dies, and the son dies. And I knew a widow, who for fourteen weeks put not off her raiment, and laid not down upon her bed; but her child died.

I want to say upon this subject three things.

The first is, that when we are cured, or when those whom we love are raised up, *we are to ascribe it*, not to ourselves, nor to the physician, but *to God*. We may do a good deal as it respects ourselves; our health is, in some degree, in our own hands; so that by care, by circumspection, by proper self-discipline and management, we may foster and cherish it: and, on the other hand, by vice, by profligacy, by intemperance, by undue exertions, either of body or mind, we may reduce it, and bring it low. And, I presume, David referred to some such persons as these, when he says, "Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." And, then, having shown that mercy, "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing:" as Christ said in a similar case. "Go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee."

But in the direr diseases, neither we nor the physician have any control: God speaks, and calls the man away; he removeth him out of the world: who can restrain his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? On the other hand, if he will give us health and renovation, then no earthly power can resist him. And I quote David again in this joyful case: "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear

unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compass me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." Employ the physician; use the means; boil the figs, put them on in the lump, as in the case of Hezekiah; but look above the means, and remember that exquisite account of sickness and recovery in Job, xxxiii. There are some persons who can see nothing but the patient, and the disease, and the doctor, and the medicine: the discerning eye, the pious and penetrating mind, sees, above and over all, the presiding will of God; and I have no language in which to express my sense of the blindness and infatuation of that man who thinks of nothing in the creation, no power, no influence, but that which his eye observes. In our recovery we praise God, and say, "Not unto us, not unto us, but to the Lord our God give the praise."

I wish to observe, secondly, that *bodily and moral diseases are sometimes healed at the same time*. As the eye of the body looked on the brazen serpent, so the eye of the mind was to look on that which the serpent prefigured; and there was healing by looking to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Our Lord, in several instances, made healing to be contemporaneous and identified with the forgiveness of sin: "Whether it is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk." Now a sound mind in a sound body is said to be the height of human enjoyment; but a man can go no further. And I beg to remark, that in the strict and proper sense, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was the greatest physician that ever appeared in the world; and viewed in that light, he is unparalleled and supreme; in this he has the pre-eminence. He was the physician to the whole nation of the Jews. They brought out before him maladies which were incurable, and in the greatest numbers: and not by delay, not by experiments, not by bitter medicine; but by a touch, and in the twinkling of an eye, he healed every one, and there was no return of the malady. This is fact, this is no figure; but it is fact figurative and symbolical of that which is more important still; I mean the renovation, the healing power, the perfect cure which he accomplished for the soul. O my soul, put thyself into the hands of Jesus Christ; and thou shalt be made perfect in him, triumphant, and for ever.

My third remark is, that *there will be no sickness in heaven*. The inhabitants shall no more say, "I am sick," for the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquities. I know that there stands in the book of Revelation this remarkable passage: "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." But "the healing of the nations" is effected *here*; the nations are *here* in the world; and as they now exist, the healing is begun. And do you mark the strength of the metaphor: there were "twelve manner of fruits," growing every year in their luxury, in their abundance, in their

variety. But it was not the *fruit* that healed the nations, only the *leaves*: there was balsamic virtue in the leaves: "Only taste, and live." And you are called by the figure to believe, and live: exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will heal you. This is the cure for all the moral maladies of our diseased and disordered nature.

I have been wont to regard the condition of man very much in the light of this image. You may be no worse—you may be incomparably better, in many respects, than I am: one may have the disease more or less virulent than another. The cure depends on the taking of the medicine. Receive the leaf; eat the leaf; and let your malady be as deep as it may, you shall be healed. Decline the leaf: refuse to eat; say it has not the virtue in it, deny that the medicine can work the cure; die and perish. Precisely on this principle it is, receive Christ—be saved: reject Christ—you are undone for ever. In heaven, as I said, I say again, there is no sickness at all. "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there: and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light." God shall wipe away every tear; the blessed shall be led to fountains of living waters; the sources of happiness in their perfection and plentitude shall be poured upon them, and flow spontaneously and for ever. Bless the Lord, O my soul, who healeth all thy diseases, and enableth thee to appear this day in his house, who will heal thee of thy last sickness, and endue thy soul with vigour and vitality, to dwell in brightness and purity for ever!

Thirdly, he "*redeemeth thy life from destruction.*" I love the beautiful words of the patriarch, when pronouncing the benediction upon his grandchildren: "The God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lad." He felt himself to be a redeemed creature—redeemed in every step, in the whole progress of his being.

You remember the application of the word "redeemed" to the Israelites in Egypt: "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: let the *redeemed* of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." They were in bonds and in subjection; and their cry and their groanings went up to heaven; and God came down, and the paschal sacrifice was ordained, and the blood sprinkled on the door-posts, and the destroying angel went over; and the Israelites came forth; they passed through the Red Sea as upon dry land, and were eminently "the redeemed of the Lord:" their lives had been preserved in the most imminent jeopardy.

And now, I ask, To which of us does not this apply? In how many instances have our lives been redeemed from death? How many dangers have there been which we have not seen with the eye? What hair-breadth escapes: another inch and we had perished! How many a man in going up and down the earth, especially in these days, must have had experience of the redeeming power of God in keeping his life from danger! There are countless dangers which we have not seen: we have been in peril when we did not know it. There has been a pestilence walking round us in impalpability; it has not been allowed to touch us: no evil has befallen us.

“ Our life contains a thousand springs,  
 And dies if one be gone :  
 Strange that a harp of thousand strings  
 Should keep in tune so long ! ”

You may say, at the beginning of every day, “ Who redeemeth my life from destruction ; ” and in the evening, when you lie down, having passed through the changes and multitudinous affairs of the day, “ Who has redeemed, for another day, my life from destruction. ” And if you live on, year by year, so as to arrive at maturity or advanced life, what can you do but apply to yourselves the ninety-first psalm ? That psalm, I think, is intended to represent the progress of man from his infancy to his last days : and the manner in which, at every stage, he piously prayed to God, committing himself to the preserving hand of the Almighty, shall stand, until at length he has to say, “ With long life hast thou satisfied me, and shown me thy salvation. ”

But who can read this clause without thinking of its deep *spiritual* meaning ? “ The redemption of the soul is precious. ” It is a great mercy when the body is preserved ; but if it only be preserved finally to fall, what will it avail ? The soul of redemption is the redemption of the soul. You remember the words of the apostle : “ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. ” We were exposed to the punishment of the law, and justice might have cast us down at any instant. God dealing with us according to our deserts might have banished us from his presence and shut us up in the great prison of his wrath. Instead of this we have been *redeemed*, recovered by the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ his Son. So that redemption is the great principle which runs from the beginning to the end of Scripture : and if we arrive at glory our song will be, “ To Him that hath loved us, and redeemed us to God by his blood—to Him be the praise for ever ! ” Instead of being left in our condition of slavery and liability to punishment, we are redeemed ; redeemed now so as to be in a state of favour and acceptance ; to live in the calm sunshine of the countenance of God ; to feel that he is our Father ; that being redeemed by the blood of Christ, he hath given to us the Spirit of adoption, whereby we say, Abba, Father : we feel that we are saved, that we are under the preserving care of heaven ; that being a part of the flock of Christ, we shall never perish, and none shall pluck us out of our Father’s hand. “ Who redeemeth thy life from destruction ; ” and intends to consummate his plans and finish his purposes in glory. O to enjoy the final results of redemption in the presence of the Father and of the Lamb ! “ God hath not appointed to wrath, (may I not confidently say ?) “ but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. ” “ The redeemed ”—sensible of their redemption, carrying the marks and signatures of their condition upon their person—“ the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion ; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head : they shall obtain gladness and joy ; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. ”

“ *Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercy.* ” “ *Crowneth thee.* ” The word “ crown ” is employed on various occasions. The high-priest was crowned ; kings were crowned ; virgins on their marriage-day were crowned. Among the Greeks, this image was variously employed ; there were crowns of



fame, and crowns of victory—“Crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercy.” God’s own hand weaves for you the garland, and prepares for you the crown: and the crown of mercy and loving-kindness which God shall put on the head is not like the diadem of royalty, which would make the king’s head ache to wear it but a day; not like the chaplet, not like the garland worn by those who were victors in eastern games, which withered and began to die so soon as they were put on. God puts the beautiful crown of his loving-kindness and tender mercy on the man’s head. O, let him wear it!

I cannot now enlarge on the mercy; I cannot express myself in relation to his tenderness: but I will say this—Lift up your eyes to God and to heaven, and, responding to his own words, say, “I am a crowned one!” Go about in your coronation vesture, especially in God’s own day; and in the midst of God’s own institution, say, “My soul is joyful in the Lord; my spirit rejoiceth in God my salvation: he has adorned me with the robe of righteousness, clothed me with the garment of salvation, and put the beautiful crown on my head.” He does for every believer what he is represented as doing for Joshua the high-priest—“Take away the filthy garments from him:” bring the change of raiment fresh, fair, and fragrant, out of the ivory palaces in glory, whereby they who behold them, and those on whom they are put, are made glad: put the beautiful crown on his head, and let him minister to me in his office and in his condition. O God, crown us all with thy mercy! Let thine own soft hand, directed by thine own tender, loving heart, put the chaplet on my head, and upon the head of those who hear me! Come with thine own garments, that we may walk about, festive, joyous, in holy, heavenly happiness, in the midst of one another, making this canticle our own—“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.”

“*Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s*”—in power of pinion and of flight, which shall never decay, but exercise itself for ever in regions congenial with its own, with Christ and his redeemer. I add no more: may God command his blessing.

THE WORKS OF GOD IN NATURE, PROVIDENCE, AND GRACE.

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REV. H. F. FELL, A.M.

TRINITY CHURCH, ISLINGTON, JUNE 19, 1836.

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"The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein."  
PSALM cxi. 2.

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THE generality of mankind, engaged in the concerns of active life, cannot have any considerable portion of time to devote to the study of the works of God. Brethren, as Christians, we must ever remember that we are not our own, we are bought with a price; and therefore our time, our talents, our faculties are given to us to occupy in that state and station of life to which God hath called us. And if his overfuling providence has placed us in a sphere of labour and toil, it would ill become our character as his servants to refuse what is thus enjoined us, for the sake of that which, however pleasing, is out of the path of duty.

But though this is well to be laid down as a general rule, and indeed the whole state of civilized society in this country could not proceed without it, yet it is likewise true, that where the heart is really engaged to love God, it will, by a wise, and prudent, and proper distribution of time employ itself in the contemplation of things which redound to the glory of God. This is by no means inconsistent with duty, but on the contrary, it is the highest duty; it is that which shall demand our attention here, it is that which shall occupy our enlarged powers, if reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, throughout eternity.

That this is practicable, take as an example the writer of this Psalm, that highly favoured servant of God, the king and sweet singer of Israel, who, though in the midst of war, and whilst daily exercising the arduous functions of royalty—found time and opportunity to praise God in the sanctuary, who could behold his works by day, and meditate thereon by night. Thus, then, we cannot excuse ourselves from that which appears to be the great end of our creation: and if we find no delight, no appetite, in meditating upon the works of Jehovah, we may be assured, my brethren, that our Christian principle is at a very low ebb, and our souls are far from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in us.

I must not, however, be understood to confine myself in this observation to the display of the divine majesty and power in the creation of the worlds, when I speak of the works of God, or the astonishing exhibitions of Deity in the preservation of created beings. All these are in truth powerful incentives to us to search out the works of God: but O be it still remembered with liveiy

gratitude, that there is a higher, a better, a more lasting subject of praise, more suitable with his character as a sinner than any others; and these are the works of grace, and to these we would refer, when speaking of the works of the Lord which "are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein."

But we will take an enlarged view of the subject; and I invite you, my beloved brethren, to come and contemplate with me, upon the present occasion, the works of God in nature, in providence, and in grace. May the Eternal God bless our meditations, and as his creatures make us to delight in him and to search out his works as our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier.

First, search out the works of God IN NATURE. Here a wide field presents itself. The light which shines about our path, the emblem of the purity of Deity, must strike the mind of the wise. The mid-day sun is an image of God's uncreated glory. Nay, whether I gaze upon the heavens, and trace the revolution of the orbs which move there; whether I examine the insect which flits by me, or the blade of grass on which I tread, I perceive the works of Him who is mighty in operation, whose wisdom should be the unceasing theme of adoration and praise to us all. Yes, beloved, every thing above us, every thing around us, every thing beneath us, lives. Every clod of earth teems with animation; every drop of water swarms with animalcula, imperceptible, indeed, to the naked eye (and mercifully so), but plainly to be seen when the eye is assisted by art. Most probably myriads float in the air which we breathe, and are inhaled in the act of inspiration. Surely curiosity might induce us to seek out the works of God even if we had no other motive than mere inquisitiveness and curiosity. But we cannot examine these things as we ought without feelings of lively gratitude, that through the life-giving power of Jehovah every thing ministers either to the necessities or to the convenience of man.

But on this head there is a still more familiar manifestation of the works of God which we should meditate upon. I wish you to turn your reflections upon yourselves. Contemplate the human body; observe the union of its several parts, and their fitness for the particular purpose for which they are designed; mark the composition and appearance of the whole; what incomparable workmanship is perceptible in the whole frame. You discover bones marvellously united; fibres and nerves fine and delicate in the extreme; muscles possessing incredible strength; veins singularly disposed, through which the stream of life flows, complicated and branched into every part of the body; and the spirit, at an unknown moment, and in an unsearchable manner, superadded to give impulse to the whole system. In consequence of every wish of the mind this or that muscle is put in motion. But no one can define the union between matter and spirit; and Philosophy in vain attempts to lay her finger upon the spring which agitates the vibration of ten thousand invisible fibres. The whole mass of blood in the human frame is perpetually circulating through every channel, and returning to the heart, black and improper for the purposes of life, until it has undergone an instantaneous chemical change, which is effected in the lungs by the air, and it flows on to pursue its unwearied course in our body.

But mark, brethren, how near we are to eternity. If the air inhaled be unsuitable to perform this process, and unable to effect this change, death is the inevitable consequence; immediate death. Who amongst us, brethren,

that has the smallest pretensions to reason, will disown the hand that made him to be wonderful? Who, my brethren, who has been taught to know the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, will hesitate to join with the Psalmist and say, as in Psalm cxxxix. "For I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee."

But our search into the works of God must not rest here: if these things are marvellous in creation, they are still more wonderful in PRESERVATION. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein," as it respects his daily guidance and control in providence. Let us reflect on these works of providence. Here we behold his greatness in that he hath made the round world so fast that it cannot be moved out of its course without his sovereign will: here we behold his works even in the lily of the field. Who can be satisfied with the consideration that God, at an inconceivable distance from man, governs the revolutions of planets and worlds, but does not condescend to the immediate wants of private individuals? Who can view the great Creator as the God of a general providence, without knowing him as the God of a special and particular providence? Surely it is written for such in vain, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Surely the character of Him who states himself to be the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, is sadly changed towards the children of men, since the time when the Israelites were conducted through the wilderness; and the promise of the Messiah is in vain, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world;" if we are not permitted to trace his works towards us individually.

How sadly do they mistake the works of God with man, who know him not as the God of their individual families, the God of their private interests, the God "unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid." O yes, he is indeed to be pitied who cannot see the hand of an overruling providence in every sickness, in every trial, in every pain, in every judgment, and especially, I would say, in those afflictive dispensations whereby he deprives a family of a dear and near relative. O how miserable is that person who can follow a beloved object to the grave, but cannot say, in faith and submission, "Here is the finger of God." Brethren, much solid comfort is lost, and much is added to the weight of woe, by this unhappy ignorance of the sovereign Disposer of all the affairs of man. The apostles and primitive Christians acted far differently: read their writings with attention and prayer, and you will find, that the apostle James could thus admonish the despisers of God's providence: "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It

is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." And you will find, that the apostle Paul does not even venture to move from place to place, without a most solemn reference to the guidance of the Lord of heaven and earth. We read in 1 Thessalonians, iii. 11: "Now God himself, and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you." He never parted with a friend without a similar application; and he tells his Philippian converts, that he trusts in the Lord to send Timotheus unto them. Thus, if to the unthinking and unenlightened mind, the works of God in providence are unknown, and, therefore, unimproved, to the soul taught of God, the consideration of all his providential guidances is most delightful. Brethren, I trust you know it, that it is a theme of unceasing gratification to the spiritual mind, to observe the work of God's providence in the minutest circumstance, to observe his hand guiding and controlling all our affairs; so that though often oppressed with fears, and oft-times disposed to be overwhelmed with anxieties for some particular object that to us may appear desirable, we have this resting-place, that Jehovah, our Creator, and Benefactor, and Friend, ruleth over all, even to the falling of a sparrow. O, may this consideration be unceasingly a consideration to you, my friends, to lead you to look from external circumstances, to the controlling of an infinite, an all-wise, and everlasting God, who says to our trials, as he says to the waves of the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further."

Again, "the works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." We meditate upon that display of sovereign power, without which, every thing else is but vanity and vexation of spirit, I mean the works of God IN GRACE. We have considered his works in nature and in providence, but what, beloved, will it avail us, if, after returning our thanks to the Father of all mercies, in the words of our beautiful liturgy, "for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life," if there were no further subject for gratitude and thankfulness, if we were not in our hearts to add this, "above all for his inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory?" The works of God may be matter of wonder, they may call forth admiration from the exquisite proofs of divine wisdom; but if his justice be not satisfied, if there be no grace in the heart, all other things will only tend to man's greater condemnation.

The works of God in grace, resemble his works in nature, and are frequently so used in the sacred Scriptures. Thus at creation, God said, "Let there be light," and there was light: and so in speaking of the new creation of the soul, the apostle uses a similar expression: "For God," says he, "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." That God of his own free will should create a world, and place the family of man upon it, as the sovereigns of all, is indeed an evidence that God is love; since he could only have as the end, the happiness of the creature, in connexion with his own glory. But that, upon man's rebellion against his Benefactor and Friend, he should not only reveal to him the plan of redemption, but should provide every thing needful for the completion of his purpose, as to suffer his own Son, allied to him, and equal with him, by an ineffable and inexplicable

union, to take upon him the nature of the rebel, and not to spare him, but to deliver him up for us all, is, indeed, such an act of unfathomable love, that if at all acquainted with it in heart and mind, we must, from day to day, consider this work of God, and consider it as a work planned by infinite wisdom, and executed by infinite love.

Brethren, without any disparagement to what we have already invited you to search into, we may paraphrase the language of Peter, and say, that though the heavens, which shew the handy work of God, should pass away with a great noise, though the elements should melt with fervent heat, and the works that are therein should be burnt up, yet we, through faith and patience inherit the promises; and we cannot be disappointed, for through grace, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. O, what a value does this stamp upon the soul of man, that all these things which now call forth our praises, and excite our wonderment, are destined for destruction; but that immortality is stamped upon every person present, and that we shall remain, when this earth which we tread upon, this air we breathe, this canopy of the heavens which we delight to contemplate, shall be no more.

Since, then, all things are yours if ye are Christ's, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come, let us call to mind that we have them as the subject matter of privilege; as the subject matter of improvement here, and as the subjects of praise throughout eternity. O that I might hope that the language of my text may be deeply impressed upon every heart, and that we may be willing from day to day, and from year to year, to study and to search out the works of God, in nature, in providence, and in grace!

But I must again urge it upon you to consider the works of God in grace, the marvellous works of God, because much of the delight to be derived from the other must be lost unless God is known as the God of grace, and his work of grace is begun in your heart. Your wonder, therefore, should begin with this consideration, that amongst the works of God there is provision made for the very chief of sinners. Is not this a great work of God: ought not this work to be "sought out of all them that have pleasure therein?" Consider, brethren, there is provision made for the very chief of sinners. Sins of the blackest die may be forgiven, and souls most desperately wicked be washed pure. Search into these works, and you will find examples for your hope that are cheering indeed. Search into the works of God as manifested in the penitent and broken-hearted Paul. Behold the works of God in the conversion of another king of Israel, the sanguinary Manasseh. Search the works of God towards the father of the faithful, who, from a state of gross idolatry became an heir of the righteousness which is by faith, a monument for future generations of the exceeding riches of divine grace. Look to more modern monuments of the works of God. We can scarcely read a passage of the history of the life of Immanuel, without finding an instance of the power of God in his works of grace. The apostle, a Mary Magdalen, a Peter, a Samaritan woman, a thief upon the cross. Come, then, and reason with the God of all grace, and if your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, if they be red as crimson they shall be as wool. Forbear then from your iniquities, mark the offers of pardon, grace, and everlasting life. They are free and full and satisfactory: "without money, and without price." O mark this, brethren, and become yourself, this very hour, the theme of exciting joy to the angelic choir

that are so interested in the welfare of man, that as we read to you this morning in the Gospel, they wait for your acceptance of the heavenly kingdom, in order that they may make the realms of glory resound with their golden harps; "for there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

But if, my beloved brethren, you have already closed with the offer, and you know the works of God in grace, and are yourselves living monuments of its power, its excellency, its sovereignty, then you have, I doubt not, seen his marvellous acts in nature, and in providence, as the acts of your God and reconciled Father. You can remember the various modes that he was pleased to adopt in bringing you to the knowledge of himself; you can behold in some of the minutest circumstances of your past lives, that God was with you; that goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life; and you are willing to trust him for the remainder of your course.

What I would then say to you finally is this; cultivate as the improvement of this subject, such dispositions of mind as are suited with your high character. When contemplating the works of Jehovah, let his ways in nature produce humility as well as admiration. When bearing in mind his dispensations of providence towards you, let your former ignorance of what is good for you direct you to lie passive in his hand, knowing that resignation, submission, and patience, best befits creatures so near-sighted as we are: that if the Christian must become a little child before he can enter the kingdom of heaven, they are nearest in spirit to the kingdom of heaven, who continue most humbly dependent upon their gracious guide and mighty counsellor. And above all, my Christian brethren, let gratitude, accompanied with zeal, reign in your hearts, and learn, that whilst engaged in the highest pleasures which man can enjoy, you may persuade others to partake of your felicity; and by kindness and love unfeigned, intreat your companions and friends to search out the works of the Lord which are great, assuring them of your own experience, that you find in the choice that there is from day to day an increase of pleasure. May God give us his grace, that we may search into his works more and more, until we come to the possession of those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore. Amen.

## SALVATION OFFERED TO ALL.

“A KING publishes a wide and unexcepted amnesty to the people of a rebellious district in his empire, upon the bare act of each presenting himself, within a limited period, before an authorised agent, and professing his purposes of future royalty. Does it at all detract from the clemency of this deed of grace, that many of the rebels feel a strong reluctance to this personal exhibition of themselves, and that the reluctance strengthens and accumulates upon them by every day of their postponement; and that, even before the season of mercy has expired, it has risen to such a degree of aversion on their parts as to form a moral barrier in the way of their prescribed return that is altogether impassable? Will you say, because there is no forgiveness to them, there is any want of amplitude in that character of forgiveness which is proclaimed in the hearing of all; or that pardon has not been provided for every offence, because some offenders are to be found with such a degree of perverseness and of obstinacy in their bosom, as constrains them to a determined refusal of all pardon? The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin; and there is not a human creature who, let him repent and believe, will ever find the crimson inveteracy of his manifold offences to be beyond the reach of its purifying and its peace-speaking power. And tell us if it detract, by a single iota, from the omnipotence of this great Gospel remedy, that there are many sinners in the world who refuse to lay hold on it? To the hour of death it is within the reach of all and of any who will. This is the period in the history of each individual, at which this great act of amnesty expires: and, to the last minute of his life, it is competent for me, and for every minister of the Gospel, to urge it upon him, in all the largeness, and in all the universality which belong to it; and to assure him, that there is not a single deed of wickedness with which his faithful memory now agonizes him, not one habit of disobedience that now clothes his retrospect of the past in the sad colouring of despair, all the guilt of which, the blood of the Saviour cannot do away.

“But, though we may offer—that is not to say that he will accept: though we may proclaim, and urge the proclamation in his hearing, with every tone of truth and of tenderness—that is not to say, that our voice will enter with power, or make its resistless way through those avenues of his heart, where he has done so much to rear a defending barrier, that may prove to be impenetrable. Though there be truth in our every announcement—that is not to say that the demonstration of the Spirit will accompany it—even that Spirit who, long ere now, may have left to himself the man who, his whole life long, has grieved and resisted him. It is still true that the pardon lies at his acceptance; and it may be as true, that there can be no pardon to him, because he has brought such an inveterate blindness upon his soul, that he will neither receive the truth nor love it, nor feel those genuine impulses by which it softens the heart of man to repentance. And thus it is, that while the blood of Christ cleanseth the every sin of every believer, the sin against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven; because, with this sin, and with its consequences upon him, man wills not, and repents not, and believes not.”—DR. CHALMERS.



## THE GOSPEL TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS.

REV. J. SHERMAN,

SPA FIELDS CHAPEL, JUNE 26, 1836.

“ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”—2 CORINTHIANS, iv. 7.

THERE is often great occasion for fear, my brethren, lest the ministers of Christ who are extensively useful, should by that usefulness be lifted up above measure, and thereby by the very exaltation of mind, through their own usefulness, become independent of divine influence. To prevent this God often suffers them to be tempted with most grievous temptations; to be assaulted in a variety of ways above those who hear the Gospel; to have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan sent to buffet them. Often he humbles them amongst the people to whom they minister, gives them such a deep experience of their own emptiness, weakness, and unworthiness, as most painfully proves to them, and convinces them, that without him they can do nothing.

And there is great occasion for fear, lest the people who are blessed under their ministrations should think of them more highly than they ought to think. This is often the case, especially with young converts, and those who receive the first serious impressions through their instrumentality. It is to be expected, my dear brethren, that the soul which has been in the darkness of death will naturally love the man whose hand first held out to them the torch of life, and led them into the enjoyment of light and life. It is to be expected that they who have been in the miry clay of despair, whose feet have stuck fast in the horrible pit of conviction and deep agony respecting their everlasting welfare, it is to be expected that such persons will love the man, who first throws out to them the threefold cord of divine love, raises them up out of the pit, and plants their feet fast on the Rock of eternal ages, whereby they may sing a new song of love and joy to the great High Priest of their profession. It is to be expected that many of these individuals, who are full of sorrow on account of the miseries that await them, who are so deeply convinced of their guilt that they cannot ever look up to heaven with any degree of hope or joy—I say, it is to be expected, that they will love the man who tells them first of pardon in Christ, welcomes them to come to him, and to rejoice in the possession and enjoyment of a full, free, and everlasting pardon of all their iniquities. O! the pangs of the guilty state are so dreadful, and the joys of the pardoned state are so great, that he who passes from the one to the other by the instrumentality of any individual, will naturally, will necessarily, and ought scripturally, to love the man by whom he has received such mercies.

But there is a great fear, that although this is quite right to a certain extent, there is a great fear, beloved, lest this love should degenerate into partiality, so that they should never be able to hear any individual as they hear that man; that they should never receive the Gospel from other lips as they have received it from his. In consequence of this, we find a great portion of the third chapter of the first of Corinthians taken up in shewing the necessity of this partiality being done away with, and that form of real love to all the ministers of Jesus Christ, as bearers of the same great truths, established in its place. In consequence of this love degenerating into partiality, you find that the members of the church at Corinth divided themselves into companies. One said, "I am for Paul;" another said, "I am for Apollos;" another said, "I am for Cephas;" and another said, "I am for Christ." One said, "I am for Paul, the most solemn and profound preacher;" another said, "I am for Apollos, the most lively and florid orator;" another said, "I am for Cephas, the most affectionate and zealous pleader." "But," says the apostle, "this is all wrong, this formation into parties; this is not according to the spirit of the Gospel, nor according to the obligations under which you are laid to divine grace. No; I have planted, and Apollos has watered: I have introduced you into the knowledge of Christ, and Apollos has come after me and watered the seed that was sown, and been the instrument of raising you up as trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. I have planted, and Apollos has watered, but God gave the increase: so then neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth, but God that gave the increase."

And in this chapter his aim is quite the same. The whole of the preceding chapter to that from which the text is taken, is taken up by shewing the excellency and the superiority of the Gospel dispensation to that of the law. That was the ministration of condemnation, this is the ministration of righteousness; that was the ministry of death, this is the ministry of life. So after having stated the nature and excellency of that dispensation, he comes in this to shew how this dispensation was used by themselves; the manner in which they preached and sent forth the Gospel to the world, which he has been describing in the preceding chapter. "Therefore," he says, "seeing we have this ministry, this revelation, intrusted to us, as we have received mercy, we faint not. We have received mercy ourselves; have tasted how sweet it was to have our sins pardoned; and we cannot but tell of the things we have tasted, and handled, and felt. And many a time when we have stood up to testify of the Gospel of the grace of God, mercy has been offered to us by the hour, and by the hope of divine mercy sustaining us in our ministry we fainted not. And this is the way we have prosecuted our labours, we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." But as if he should say, "If any of you should possibly think that it is on account of our dispensing the Gospel in this manner, it has become quite successful, and therefore the honour of this dispensation, and its success, belongs to us, we have to tell you different from this; for the same God that commanded the light first to shine out of darkness, and reduced order out of confusion, the very same God hath commanded light to shine into men's minds; and hence, has given them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ: as to our-

selves, what are we? We have the treasure, it is true; but the treasure is in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us."

I intend this morning, therefore, by divine assistance, to confirm these truths which have been opened to you in the introduction of this discourse this morning. The text shews, you perceive, the excellency of the Gospel as it is here declared: it is a "treasure." It shews the character of the instruments who disseminate this treasure; they are "earthen vessels:" and it shews you why such instruments are used to disseminate this treasure; "that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us."

First, then, you will perceive, **THE EXCELLENCY OF THE GOSPEL**, as it is here declared. It is a "treasure." Now a treasure is, of course, something very excellent. The term is generally so applied and so used; and the Gospel is particularly and especially a treasure, for its value, for its abundance, and for its duration. Look at each of these.

The Gospel is described in the word of God as a treasure for its *value*. A treasure imports something valuable; and what, my brethren, so valuable as the Gospel? I am well aware, that to many minds, and, perhaps, many in this place, the Gospel is not estimated as a very great treasure. They are drawn to the house of God; they come, perhaps, from habit, perhaps from duty; they hear the Gospel, and pass to their own homes, and to them it seems as a matter of course. But, perhaps, there is some mind in this house this morning, who during the past day of the week may have been convicted of his own guilt, seen his own danger developed by the exhibition of the law of God to his conscience, seen his approaching misery which is coming upon him when he dies. And if I can but lay hold of that conscience this morning, by declaring to it the nature of the Gospel; I know that that mind, if there be any one in this whole place, will say, that the Gospel is a treasure.

Beloved, what can be so valuable as the Gospel? Is a *Saviour* of any value to the lost and the guilty? Why this is a revelation of Christ, and of salvation by him. It is "the Gospel of Christ;" it is "the glorious Gospel of Christ:" or, as Mr. Scott says, the word should be translated, "the Gospel of the glory of Christ," exhibiting him in his glory in the Gospel. Is *free favour* of any value to the poor criminal, whereby the judge tells him the king has pardoned him? Then the Gospel is precious to such a mind, for it is the Gospel of the grace of God. Is *life* valuable to a dying man? Then the Gospel is precious; for "skin for skin; all that a man hath will he give for his life:" this is the word of life; and he that believeth it hath everlasting life. Is *salvation* itself valuable; rescue from danger and woe? Then this is the Gospel of your salvation, pointing out how God is reconciled to man, honourably with all his perfections, and how man can be saved without any sacrifice of the principles of the government of Deity. Is *light* valuable? Truly light is *sweet* and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes; and this is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ"—light with which we see God. All the systems which were ever presented to the world of religion previous to the Gospel, knew nothing of God, could give no rational idea of the Deity; but here he is presented in his glory, and in all his attributes, and all his grandeur. Is *wisdom* precious? The Gospel is the wisdom of God in

a mystery; all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are here summed up in the Gospel. Moreover, my brethren, are *garments* precious to him who feels himself naked? *Crowns* and *robes*, are these precious? The Gospel presents the robe of righteousness, the garment of salvation, the crown of glory, the ornaments of beauty, to clothe and to honour the guilty spirit. Are *medicines* valuable; antidotes for diseases, whereby they are instantaneously cured? "He sent forth his word and healed them." "O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and his wonderful works to the children of men." Why, sirs, the Gospel opens blind eyes, unstops deaf ears, makes the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing; heals the broken in heart, raises the very dead, and saves to the uttermost all who come to participate in the blessings which the great Physician dispenses. Is not *food* precious, necessary food? "I have estimated the words of his lips more than my necessary food:" not "more than the wine after I have taken a hearty meal;" not "more than the dessert, and the luxuries of the table;" no, but "more than my bread and my water, more than my necessary food." Are *discoveries* valuable? Well, then, here are discoveries that were never made before. Here the most wonderful mysteries are opened; how the Gentiles could be saved as well as the Jews, and made partakers of the grace of Christ by the Gospel; how the Redeemer became incarnate; how redemption was effected, how the sinner was saved, and how God was glorified by the salvation of that sinner—all in the Gospel are made plain; he has sent this mystery of divine truth, and opened it to all nations for the obedience of faith. O precious Gospel! What invaluable treasure is divine truth to the mind of man! So said David: "I will bless thee for thy word, for all thy words are righteousness." So said Paul: "Unto me, who am the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I might preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." And so said the Hebrew martyrs; they "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better, even an enduring substance."

And so say you. I might appeal to numbers who are here present as to the value which they attach to the Gospel. Why, what has the Gospel been to you? It has comforted you in your distress, when you had nothing to cleave to. Its promises have elevated your hopes, and raised you above fear many a time when your heart was bowed down with the deepest distress: it exhibited to you a Saviour, all ready and willing to save you, when your hopes were gone and fled, and hell stood open before you. And many a time, when you have not known which way to go, or what to do, some promise of the Gospel applied by the Spirit of God to the heart has lifted up your minds, made you feel a peace and joy in believing, so that you have gone on your way happily rejoicing. Such a valuable treasure is the Gospel.

But, then, it is called a treasure for its *abundance*. "The unsearchable riches of Christ;" enough for every soul, and enough for all souls who come to him. It is the glory of the Gospel that in it atonement is complete. Were all the angels in heaven to unite to add to the celestial possessions, they could add nothing. The voice which now whispers in my ears in delightful harmonies what was uttered upon the cross, "It is finished," is that which gives excellency to the Gospel, that presents to the poor sinner a righteousness wrought out and brought in; an atonement complete and perfected, so that he has not to

make atonement for sin; he has only to receive it, to believe in it, and to repose in it, and to apply it to his own soul with all the comforts of it. All the influence necessary to convert this soul, and apply this Gospel with divine power to the heart, all is treasured up in Christ. "It pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell." We are told, that when the Spanish ambassador was shewn the treasures of St. Mark, in Venice, he immediately groped to find the bottom of the treasure; and a page, who was standing by, said, "In this, my master's treasure excels yours; in that it has no bottom, it cannot be found, the treasures are here so deep." So we say of the Gospel, that compare it with any other treasure, there is no treasure that comes near it. It has no bottom; none have ever reached the depth and sufficiency of this heavenly treasure. Millions in all ages have received, and yet there is abundance; and millions of souls are this day receiving, and yet there is room; and millions are yet to receive; every soul in its peculiar condition finds something in its endless varieties just adapted to its state. There are in it the riches of pardon, the riches of justification, the riches of sanctification, the riches of expectation; and hence proceeds satisfaction. A man is never satisfied till he enjoys the Gospel. You see individuals in the world seeking for happiness; like a butterfly, they fly from one flower to another, and sip the honey from it; but they are not satisfied till they come to the rose of Sharon, and then they find all that they have been seeking. They have a satisfaction; as our Lord told the poor woman, that she had been seeking sinful pleasure, but had not found it till that day: "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, it shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

There are three things that earthly treasures cannot do for a man: they cannot satisfy divine justice; they cannot pacify the divine wrath; they cannot quiet a guilty conscience. And these things men find to be true when they come to die. How humbling is the consideration by which the Psalmist represents this fact, that with all the treasures an individual possesses, they cannot redeem the soul; they can add nothing to his happiness in that respect. And, therefore, my brethren, though there is such an abundance in these heavenly treasures, they are all harmless treasures. "I have," says the prophet, "seen a wonderful evil in the earth;" and what is this evil? "Riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt." Many a man who has been a liberal man, and an affectionate man, and a pious man, before he had a large estate left him, turns aside after his property has come into his possession, and instead of all those bright and benevolent feelings which once glowed in his heart, the very riches and possessions which he has rendered him covetous, and an object of pity rather than of congratulation. But the riches of the Gospel have a very different tendency, my brethren; none in all the world is ever made worse by a large possession of these riches. What are these riches? They make a man rich towards God, rich in faith, rich in good works. These are the blessed riches of the Gospel. O these treasures exceed all other treasures, and make them all contemptible. This is the good news to the sons of men which Christ himself gives, that after they have participated of these treasures large and wide, they may come again: "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved;" and the more the mouth is opened and enlarged, craving these treasures, the more God is honoured, and the more liberally the blessings are diffused.

But, then, observe, it is a treasure for its *duration*. They are permanent riches. "Riches and honour," says the Saviour, "are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness." Other treasures make to themselves wings, and flee away; and just when a man wants some consolation, lo, they are gone; he cannot of all his treasure take any thing with him. That is an affecting account, in the book of the Revelation, that all the ships, and the gold, and the silver, and the things in which men have lusted, and their soul has trusted itself, are gone away, and they are no more seen for ever. A man takes his riches to his coffin; but there he leaves them; he cannot take any thing with him into another world. But the Gospel is a treasure which has this peculiar characteristic, that it is "the *everlasting* Gospel." There is to be no other revelation of mercy to the sons of men; as it is the best, so it is the last that God will ever make to the sons of men: and all its blessings, all its honours, all its comforts, all its prospects, are, like itself, everlasting. Does it speak to me of knowledge? Why, then, "this is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." Does it announce to me of mercy? Does it speak of God's mercy? Why, then, the mercy which it reveals is this: "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon the children's children." Does it speak to me of joy? Well, then, "the ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with everlasting joy upon their heads." Does it tell me of love? Well, then, it is "the everlasting love wherewith God has loved me." Does it speak to me of the way in which it calls me to tread? It is "the way everlasting." Does it tell me of strength which I am to apply and receive? Well, then, it is "everlasting strength." Does it speak to me of salvation? "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation;" they are "not to be ashamed world without end." Does it bring to me light, whereby it discovers my darkness, and exhibits the beauty of Jehovah? It is everlasting light with which the days of my mourning are to be ended. Does it speak of the habitations beyond the grave, into which it invites me to enter; and tells me, that by faith in the blood of the Lamb I shall finally enter? These, into which it invites me, are "everlasting habitations." So that you perceive, brethren, that when ages shall have rolled away, and all the things in this world shall be burnt up, when every thing on which the creature has reposed his happiness is passed from him for ever and for ever, this treasure shall fill heaven with joy, and make up the bliss of Paradise, and to everlasting this treasure shall abound. It is in consequence, therefore, of these things, that the Gospel is called a treasure.

But, secondly, we have THE INSTRUMENTS, who proclaim and set forth this Gospel. They are called in the text, "earthen vessels." The allusion is here, in all probability, to the seventh chapter of Judges, the sixteenth and seventeenth verses, where Gideon was commanded to go against the Midianites, and to take pitchers, earthen pitchers, in which was to be placed a lamp; and that when he came to the host of the Midianites, the pitchers were to be broken and the lamps exhibited, and then the Midianites were to be put to flight. God acts spiritually in the same way now, in the conversion of the world. The light, or the lamp, which ministers are to take to the world, is the glorious Gospel of the ever-blessed God: the pitchers, or the earthen vessels in which this light here is contained, are the ministers of the Gospel; and by

these he intends to subdue, not only one portion, but all the world to himself.

And these ministers are so called for various reasons. As to their *origin*, they are earthen vessels. "we know," says the apostle, "that if the earthly house of this our tabernacle were dissolved." The minister of Christ is but a man; he is but a sinner, a sinful man; he sprang out of the dust as others did; he has a body formed out of the earth, and he is supported by the earth, and returns to the earth, like others: he possesses earthly passions in common with his brethren, and in common with his fellow-men. "We are men," says the apostle, when speaking to those whom he exhorted to believe in Christ, "we are men of like passions with yourselves." He is subject to the attacks of death, and the contagion of sin, as the history of ministers will very generally shew you. But, yet, God takes these lumps of dust as instruments, and he places them in his church, and then takes them out of the church, puts the lamp of life within them, and tells them to go forth and exhibit it to the world.

They are so called, as to *the estimation in which they are held*. They are vessels, but they are received by the world only as earthen vessels, the workmanship of the potter. And oft they are so, as to the meanness of their pedigree. They are poor and they are low in this world. Many of them rise from low stations in life. And if not so, then they are often mean in their presence and appearance. So was Paul: there was nothing showy or dazzling in his appearance; his bodily presence was weak, and his speech, we are told, was contemptible. Moses said, "I am not eloquent heretofore nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant." Amos says, "I was no prophet, nor the son of a prophet; but I was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: and yet God took me to proclaim the Gospel to others." Peter was a fisherman; Matthew was a publican; John Bunyan was a tinker; Whitfield was a servitor at college; and yet they are taken and sent forth, though low and mean oft in their pedigree, to announce to the world the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. These, and multitudes more, are the earthen vessels which God has employed for the conversion and salvation of mankind. It is quite true, that sometimes more splendid vessels are used; but, then, it very frequently happens, though there are some, we are glad to allow, blessed exceptions to the general rule—yet if the vessels be more splendid, they are generally less frequently used for the conversion of man to the knowledge of Jesus Christ: they who preach the grand and distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel with the greatest simplicity, the greatest energy, the greatest power, are often the men whom God the Holy Spirit uses for effectually turning sinners from the error of their way to God.

They are also so called, on account of their *bodily constitution*. They are earthen vessels, the same as other men. The people are not made of clay, and the ministers of brass and iron; no, my brethren, but they are earthen vessels. Are you sick and dying? So are we. Are you weak and feeble? So are we. Are you subject to infirmities? So are we. Is your breath in your nostrils? So is our's. Have you no continuing city here? Such is our condition. "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" Timothy had often infirmities, and was left sick at Miletus. Epaphroditus was sick, nigh unto death. Paul, the apostle, tells us, that he had en-

dured sickness, and besought God to heal him. As it is in sickness, so it is often in death; earthen vessels are subject to knocks, to falls, and speedily to be broken; they last generally but a short time. This has been the case with some of the most eminent servants of Jesus Christ: they have lasted but a short time in their ministerial service. John the Baptist was beheaded; Stephen was stoned; Isaiah was sawn asunder; James was killed with the sword; Saul was killed by Nero: and an army of martyrs have been sent out of the world by persecutions, and fines, and imprisonments. It is often lamentable to see, how some of the choicest ministers of Christ, in the early part of their existence, when they are coming forth with promise to the church, are taken away. Such was dear Spencer, of Liverpool, who, when he had just begun his glorious career of publishing the Gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ, was taken away to another and a better world, and the world was left to wonder at the mystery of God's dispensations. I stand here as a wonder to myself, this morning; and I cannot but recollect, in the place in which I am, that here, with two young men, I first entered yonder college, and that I should now be alone of the three—the two taken to an eternal world in the prime of their existence and their usefulness! O, how oft does God take away those who are most valuable in his church, and leave the world to see, that the light of the Gospel is but put into earthen vessels!

It is the same as to their *usefulness*. An earthen vessel is useful for reception and effusion. Something must be put in, and something must be poured out. A mine is a treasure in itself; an earthen vessel has only what is put into it. Now ministers are not mines, they have no treasure in themselves; but they are earthen vessels; they are only receivers, and as they receive, they dispense: they give out, as the apostle says, "that which they receive of the Lord." Ministers are made by the great Potter, and made variously. You know Apollos was renowned for his eloquence; Peter for his zeal; Paul for his knowledge; John for his love; James for his peculiar prudence and wisdom; Barnabas as being an adept at consoling broken hearts, and sometimes thundering out the vengeance of the law, to terrify the guilty conscience. But though they are thus made, they are all made by God. Though the Master of the great house has in that house vessels of gold and vessels of silver, and vessels of wood and vessels of earth, yet they are all for the work of the ministry, and for the diffusion of the knowledge of the Gospel.

But, brethren, they have all their treasure out of the large store of the Redeemer's fulness. When Christ calls any minister of the church, he sends him not a warfare at his own charges. Many a time when we come forth to preach to you, we need your sympathies and your prayers. After all our study, all our preparation for the pulpit, we are humbled to discover what empty vessels we are; and if God had not sometimes opened our mouths in the pulpit, and exceeded our fears, we should never have entered the pulpit again. But he does so; and, therefore, we need your pity and your sympathy, knowing that we can only dispense to you that which we receive of the Lord. It is a peculiarly beautiful phrase in that text, "He hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation:" he hath put into us the ministry of reconciliation: so that we are but earthen vessels; as the king's almoner is intrusted with the king's bounty to dispense among the poor, and gives out only what he receives from the king: such are the ministers of Jesus Christ.



There is, however, an important portion of this subject on which we should dwell, and that is, THE REASON WHY THIS TREASURE IS GIVEN TO SUCH INSTRUMENTS TO DISPENSE: "That the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." And what is "*the excellency of the power*," which is alluded to in this verse? What is the excellency of the power that often accompanies the publication of the Gospel in these earthen vessels? It is sometimes expressed in metaphorical, and sometimes in plain language, in the Scriptures. In order to shew its extent, it is sometimes called "the arm of the Lord;" and when he expresses it, it is "making bare his arm:" as an individual, when about to do some great work, strips himself of those encumbrances by which his arm would be prevented from accomplishing those strokes of power. Sometimes it is called, driving his arrows into the hearts of his enemies, whereby they lie prostrate. Sometimes it is called, "the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe." Sometimes it is called, "the power of God unto our salvation."

Now the exceeding excellency of this power consists chiefly in two things. The first is, that it is the power of God. Sometimes it is ascribed to the Father. "No man can come unto me except the Father who hath sent me draw him." Sometimes it is ascribed to the Son: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Sometimes it is ascribed to the Holy Ghost: "My speech and my preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but with the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power." Now this divine power is irresistible, it is almighty; it is the same power that raised Christ from the dead, and the same power which will raise the dead at the last great day: and therefore not all the powers of hell, of prejudice, of error, of ignorance, of obstinacy and blindness, can stand before it. The gates of iron and of brass give way, and the king of glory enters. Prejudices which have barred the mind for years give way. "Oh," says one man, "I will not be a Methodist; I will not be a saint; I will not yoke myself to the people of God." But when this light enters, this glorious gospel of Christ is exhibited before the mind of the man, and its power comes, then down go the bars of prejudice, the gates open, and entrance is given to the King of Glory.

Let it be observed this is all done willingly. It is not a power which subjects an individual against his own will, but a power that enlightens the understanding, occupies the affections, draws them to heaven, and thereby subjugates the will unto itself. What shall I say to it? It is the power of light discovering darkness to the mind. It is the power of mercy, shewing the way of escape from the wrath to come. It is the power of truth, overcoming error and prejudice in the mind. It is the power of love, secretly, silently, yet effectually drawing the soul to attend to Christ's voice, and to obey that voice when it has heard it. Such is the power which accompanies the Gospel.

And then this excellency consists, not only in its being the power of God, and therefore above the possibility of resistance from man, but it consists in this, that it is the power of God which forms the image of God in the soul of man. It creates him anew in Christ Jesus, makes him a new creature. He who had no good thing in him has now the good work begun in him: he is quickened, and quickened to repentance, and to turn to God, and to love him, and to come back to his Father's house; so that he is welcomed by his Father's society, welcomed by his Father's servants, welcomed to the society of his

Father's house. His soul is made the habitation of God: "old things pass away, behold, all things are become new;" now the man loves holiness, whereas previously he hated it; loves and enjoys communion, whereas formerly he despised it. Indeed the man, the instant he receives the truth as it is in Jesus, by its power becomes a missionary. "Come," said the poor woman, "and see a man who told me all things that ever I did." He feels such a virtue in the excellency of the Gospel, that like Melancthon, it appears so plain to him, that he wonders now every one does not see with him: and as Melancthon, when he went to his father, supposed his father would instantly yield to those bright, glorious displays which he was capable of making of the excellences of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord. O blessed power, O excellent change, which is thus accomplished in this manner!

In concluding this subject, let me just advert to a class of persons who are doubtless within the house of prayer this morning, I mean those that have never received the Gospel. Sinners, has the Gospel been a treasure to you? Do you esteem it precious? If you do not, suffer me to tell you you must perish without it. It is such a treasure, that if a man has it not he dies miserable and poor, and destitute of all enjoyment from God. There was one man whom our Lord tells us was rich in this world, but he was not rich towards God; and the strongest expression of anger that ever issued from the Saviour's lips is perhaps against that individual; "Thou fool, this night shalt thy soul be required of thee; then whose are those things which thou hast prepared?" This individual, whom all the world accounted wise, because he had been enabled, by attention to his concerns and to his business, to pull down his barns and to build greater, all the world approved of it; but our Lord says, "Thou fool." Though you may be in business, you may be increasing in wealth, you may be accumulating honours, and you may have the approbation of parents, and friends, and relations, and kindreds, and those who are accounted the wise men of this world; but, if you have no estimation for the Gospel, if you have never yet valued the Gospel of Christ and received it by faith, let me tell you you are still a poor, miserable, wretched being, and when you come to die, will not have a hope of another world, nor a blessing when you enter it.

May I not also say to those who have received the Gospel; see the spirit which you should entertain towards the ministers of Jesus Christ. He has greatly condescended to you in this method of mercy, dear hearers. He does not speak to you from Sinai, as he did once to Israel: there is no thunder pealing this morning; no lightning flaming about this house. You are not afraid to come near to God by reason of the burning fire or the violence of the tempest; no, but he speaks to you in a voice like your own. Nor does he speak to you by angels; you would be greatly terrified if he did. An angel came with a message to John, and he fell at his feet as one dead. Then sympathize with ministers in their sufferings and temptations. I assure you, dear brethren, that the way to profit under the ministry of the ministers of Christ, is not to quarrel about their sermons; not to complain of their false cadences; not to pick to pieces those portions of truth which they deliver to you in plainness and simplicity; but if those who hear me this day would make it a responsible duty ere they entered this and other houses of prayer to go and fall before God in private, and cry for divine influence to be put into the earthen

vessels, they would oftener retire to their houses blessing God for what they had heard, and rejoicing in the glad sound of the voice of truth.

Let me also say, here is instruction to ministers as well as the people. Should there be any here this morning who are exercising the ministry, or preparing for it, let us learn, dear brethren, what we are. If we had ever a sense of this, we should preach better, we should melt over souls more, we should feel the value of the Gospel more ourselves, and be more in earnest to communicate it to others. When God was sending Jeremiah on an embassy of importance to the people, he bad him go down to the potter's house first, and at the potter's house he was to hear the word from God, and carry this message away to the people. Let us often go down to the potter's house; let us see what we are made of; let us see how God has honoured us. We are not to be *earthly*, though earthen vessels, but we are to be clean; if a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel fit for the Master's use. Let us therefore labour, lest a clod of clay or an accident take us away. We are but the earthen vessels; we have but a very short time to work: may God grant that the spirit of a Whitfield, and the spirit of others who laboured for his cause, may so possess our breast, that finding ourselves but earthen vessels we may communicate the precious treasure as long as God shall spare us!

I rejoice, my brethren, that one great desire of the Countess of Huntingdon when she took this chapel was, that the Gospel of Christ might be preached in the world. Her earnest desire was, that from the state of the world when this chapel was built, sinners might be converted through the dissemination of this treasure, by means of the ministers of Jesus Christ. Perhaps I cannot do better to impress on your minds the real state of the world at this period, than to read an extract from the life of Howell Harriss, Esq., an eminent minister of Christ in Wales. "There being at that time a general slumber over the land; generally people spent the Lord's day contrary to the laws of God and man, it being by none rightly observed; neither had any whom I knew a true knowledge of that God whom they pretended to worship: no sooner was the worship over than the conduct of the people discovered, that the heart was entirely alienated from all that was good: the remaining part of the day was spent in indulging in the prevailing corruptions of nature, all worship being laid aside, except among some of the Dissenters, while an universal deluge of swearing, lying, revenge, drunkenness, fighting, and gaming, had overspread the country like a mighty torrent, without any notice taken of it, or a stop, as far as I have seen, having being attempted to be put to it." It was in this state of things that the Countess of Huntingdon opened her house in Park Street, the drawing-room for the nobility, and the kitchen for the poorer class of hearers; and there Romaine and others used to testify the Gospel of the grace of God to as many as the room would hold. She was earnestly desirous of training individuals for Christ's service. When she obtained this chapel, she hoped that as a peeress of the realm she was entitled to have individuals who were educated in the establishment as her chaplains, and might use these places of worship, as places connected with the establishment: that, however, was not allowed. When she found this to be the case, her heart, burning with holy desire to spread this treasure among the sons of men, she was not to be baffled, and therefore established a college at Trevecca, for the training up and fitting of young men for the great work of the ministry; and every where, and

especially in places where sickness reigned, watering places, where fashionable vices often abounded, she attempted to plant houses of prayer, and placed ministers of Christ within them, and gathered souls to Jesus Christ.

And if my young friends, who may be looking back to the history of this time, just observe the season when this chapel was first given up in 1779 to the Countess, they will find that at that time very few places of worship in which the Gospel was preached were any where to be found around this neighbourhood. A dear and valuable friend, one of my own congregation, when this place was a tea house, and had been shut up because the figure of fame on the top, which had a trumpet, did not blow loud enough to procure votaries to fill the place, and fill the proprietor's pockets, when this place was shut up he passed by, in a state he tells me of which he was afterwards ashamed to mention or have known; and seeing a board on the outside, "This place to let," it struck him he might make a favourable speculation, and he instantly went to the proprietor and took the place. He had it on his hands twelve months before he knew what to do with it; and then two clergymen of the establishment applied to him to convert it into a place of worship. From that time the Gospel has been preached here with remarkable success. Perhaps in all the churches in the neighbourhood around, if the history of the conversion of individuals could be discovered, it would be found that many a bird has been fledged here, and as soon as it was fledged has gone and settled down in other chapels round the neighbourhood. Many of the ministers of the Gospel beneath that gallery have been educated for the ministry. There Mr. Cooper of Dublin, there Mr. Douglas of Reading, and there numbers of individuals first opened their lips to preach the Gospel of Christ at the prayer meetings. And while I think of these things, my heart gladdens within me. Then people were not quite as fastidious as they are now. At six in the morning you would see places of worship like these, during Mr. Whitfield's time, crowded with hearers coming to worship the Lamb. Here, too, many of the ministers of the establishment have found an asylum when shut out of other places. Here they have come to preach the Gospel; here Mr. Wills, Mr. Glasscock, the Hon. Mr. Shirley, and many other individuals, proclaimed the Gospel of Christ when other doors were shut against them.

I consider that this place of worship has been most eminently blessed of God, by the introduction of his truth into the Metropolis with almighty power and divine favour. I therefore have this morning to ask you to contribute of your ability to the expenses of this place, incurred by the cleansing and painting. I trust that you will aid your gifts as you pass by with your prayers, that still the light of truth may shine, that still the power of the Gospel may be felt here, and that multitudes may be drawn after the word of life of such as shall be saved. God grant this for Christ's sake.

THE UNION OF DIVINE AND HUMAN AGENCY IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

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REV. S. BRAWN,

DEVONSHIRE SQUARE CHAPEL, JUNE 23, 1836 \*.

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“For we are labourers together with God.”—1 CORINTHIANS, iii. 9.

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It is necessary that we should briefly notice the painful circumstances which led the apostle to explain so minutely as he does in the connexion of the text, the nature of the work in which he and his fellow-labourers were engaged, and the relation in which they stood to each other and to God. It appears, that many in the church at Corinth were divided in the estimate which they formed of the ministers who had laboured successfully amongst them; and in contending with each other, the respective parties exclaimed, “I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.” Whether their predilections were founded on the peculiar excellences of the different preachers, or on less honourable grounds, it is evident that the partisans had imbibed an unchristian spirit, and were sacrificing the peace of the church, if not the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, at the shrine of a worldly and carnal wisdom. “For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”

The apostle of the Gentiles, therefore, judged it necessary to remind them, that ministers, whatever may be the talents and gifts with which they are intrusted, are the servants of Christ, and under the most solemn obligations to labour for his glory and the profit of his church. “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believe, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one; and every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.”

Although our text may be translated, “For we are labourers together of God,” still the connexion shews, that the apostle considered himself and his fellow-labourers as having the presence and co-operation of God. They planted and watered; God gave the increase. They “went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.”

Let no one imagine, that when we speak of being “fellow-labourers together with God,” we assume the same rank of agency with him, or any independence of him. Our talents, our means, and our usefulness, are all from

\* On behalf of the Baptist College, at Stepney.

him. As Paul has said in another place, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think (to reckon or calculate on) any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." Still, it is equally evident, that while we are labouring together in the Gospel-field, God is with us, "working all things after the counsel of his own will."

First, then, let us consider WHAT THE WORK INCLUDES, in which God and his people are labourers together.

It is not in every work of God that we are labourers together with him. In executing many of his works, it may be truly said, "Of the people there were none with him." Neither do we suppose that the hand of God is with us in every thing we do. Our errors and depravity give rise to many actions which it would be the height of impiety to suppose that the Holy One of Israel approves.

But your attention will be directed to a course of operations which God has appointed for the execution of his purposes of mercy towards the children of men. This will include,

First, *the spread of the Gospel through the world.*

There are many passages in the Holy Scriptures, which prove that it is the design of God to extend the Gospel to every nation. I need not bring forward many to establish this, yet one may be necessary to shew the connexion between this fact and the point before us: "And the Lord said unto them, Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." It is evident from this passage, that the Gospel is to be made known amongst all the nations, and that by the union of divine and human agency. The Lord, in extending the glad tidings of salvation through the world, could have employed angels, or he could have revealed the truth by his Spirit to as many as were ordained to eternal life; but, in the exercise of sovereignty, he has committed to his servants on earth, the work of proclaiming to their fellow-men the doctrines of the cross. "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men—and he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers."

The apostles have no successors in their office. The divine origin of the Gospel being fully attested by the miracles which these inspired men wrought in the name of their ascended Lord, it was not necessary that such an order of agents should be employed in its further promulgation through the world, and, for the same reason, miraculous gifts were no longer necessary. Men of ordinary talents, and endued with the ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, are competent to spread the Gospel amongst all nations. Hence we find, that immediately after the days of the apostles, the pastors (who are also called elders, presbyters, and bishops) were on an equality in the church. They were, however, assisted in their work by evangelists and teachers, the whole church also co-operating as circumstances required with the pastors and their assistants for the "furtherance of the Gospel." In consequence of their united and strenuous labours, the Gospel, in a short period, spread over Asia Minor, through the northern parts of Africa, and the greater portion of Europe. And let it be remembered, that these men were not the servants of Cæsar, nor

the philosophers of the Grecian and Roman schools; they were despised by the powerful and the learned of this world; they were, however, strong in faith, ardent in love to God and their fellow-men, and carried out the principles of the Gospel in devoting themselves and their all to the service of their Lord and Master. They were successful in propagating the Gospel, not because it was favourable to the sentiments and taste which then prevailed amongst the nations; for its doctrines and precepts were hostile to the existing systems of religion and philosophy, and condemned the prevailing habits both of the higher and lower orders of society. They were successful, because they acted under divine authority, and being faithful, the Lord prospered the work of their hands. God set before them "an open door," which no man could shut; he entered the field of labour with them; they "planted and watered, and he gave the increase." They could say, then, "We are labourers together with God."

The same agency has been employed by the Lord through successive generations to the present day. It is admitted that much remains to be done before the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth, and the Jews with the fulness of the Gentiles be gathered into the Gospel-fold. But the agency which has been hitherto employed, is still in active operation; and not only in active operation, but it is far more united and better organized, though still defective, than it has been for many past centuries; and, consequently, the Holy Scriptures are translated into more languages, and the Gospel is proclaimed to a far wider extent than at any former period. Still, there are many millions of our fellow-sinners who have but partially, if they have at all, heard the glad tidings of salvation; and although the church of late years has put forth a little of her strength, and done something towards sending the Gospel to the heathen, she has at present done but little, compared with what remains to be done, and with what she is capable of doing. She must further awake, arise from the dust, and put on strength. She must lay hold of her Lord's strength, and become alive and mighty through his grace. She must draw nigh to her God, and he will draw nigh to her. Her ministers and members must become devoted *labourers together with God*, who is opening doors of usefulness on every hand, and the work of evangelizing the nations will be done.

Secondly, the work under consideration will include *the conversion of sinners*.

The servants of Christ are commissioned to preach the Gospel, not merely that it may take the place of idolatrous systems of worship, but that by the Gospel they may convert those who are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." The children of God were once "children of wrath even as others;" and what has made them to differ from what they once were, and from what thousands around them still are? The apostle Peter informs us: They are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." It was through hearing Peter reason on the facts which had just transpired, that the three thousand, on the day of Pentecost, "were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,

and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." When at Thessalonica where was a synagogue of the Jews, "Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women, not a few." "And it came to pass in Iconium, that Paul and Barnabas went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed."

It is to be observed, that these conversions were effected, not by miracles, but by the power of spiritual truth. The miracles wrought by Christ and the apostles established the truth of the Gospel, but it was by the Gospel itself that men were convicted of sin, and brought to repentance. Hence Paul says "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The belief of the truth, as it is in Jesus, seeing it respects our condition as sinners, and the importance of salvation through Christ, must necessarily produce an entire change in our principles, and, consequently, in our moral character; "old things pass away, and all things become new."

It must also be observed, that the facts adduced shew that the apostles and first preachers of the Gospel did not confine themselves to a bare statement of facts, doctrines, promises, and precepts; but, having proved the truth of the things which they asserted, they went further; they reasoned on these and appealed to the understanding and heart. Knowing that there is in every man a consciousness that he is responsible to God for his faith and practice, they called on all men to believe the truth, and "serve God in the Gospel of his Son." The result proved the correctness and wisdom of their procedure. They were often opposed and reproached as fanatics, and their preaching censured as foolishness. But they could appeal to facts—to the striking change, the amazing improvement effected in the moral character of their converts, and ask, "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Their converts were formerly as dark, as enslaved by superstition, and as degraded in moral character as the multitude of the heathen, out of whose fellowship they had been rescued; "but they were washed, but they were sanctified, but they were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." It hath pleased God, in this way, to effect his purposes of grace, and reconcile sinners to himself; and by so doing, he establishes the truth of the Gospel, and publicly acknowledges those, who faithfully preach it, to be "labourers together with himself." "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Although the apostles exposed the errors of philosophy, falsely so called, they did not despise true philosophy; but taught and encouraged the acquisition of a minute and extensive knowledge of the natural and moral works of God. Their writings prove that they were well acquainted both with the economy of redemption, which it was their peculiar province to proclaim, and also with the mental and spiritual constitution of man, the moral state of the world, and such other topics as are intimately connected with the spiritual interests of our race. It may be said, that they were inspired men. This is true,



but it only proves, that He, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," deemed it necessary that his apostles and ministers should possess both knowledge and wisdom, and, therefore, miraculously communicated them.

It must be obvious to every one who considers the subject, that he who seeks to turn the sinner from the error of his way, should understand the sinner's character, his mental and moral condition, his relation to God, the grounds of his responsibility, and the nature and right application of the means which God has provided for the sinner's conversion. A notice in these topics may, unintentionally, furnish the sinner with an excuse for his impenitence, and instead of awakening his conscience, and leading him to Christ, he may minister opiates, and become accessory to his everlasting death.

Hence, my brethren, the importance of those advantages which some before me enjoy at college. You are there furnished with suitable aid for the acquisition of biblical and various knowledge, which they, who have been long in the Christian ministry, assure you, is of the first importance to an efficient discharge of its duties. Your obligations to the diligent improvement of your time, the cultivation of an intimate acquaintance with the Gospel in all its bearings, on the glory of God, and the destinies of men, and the formation of such habits as will facilitate your future usefulness in the kingdom of Christ, are commensurate with the importance of these subjects. If these subjects are inseparable from consequences which invest them with a fearful importance to yourselves and others, that importance is the measure of your obligations to an unreserved devotedness to the service of your Lord and Master. Receive then the advice which Paul gave to Timothy: "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

Thirdly, the work to which your attention is directed, includes *the increase and prosperity of the Christian church.*

The conversion of sinners, although of the first importance, is only a preparatory step. If they have been rescued from the bondage of sin, it is that they may enjoy the freedom and privileges of the kingdom of heaven. If, through the blessing of God, we have succeeded in convincing them, that hitherto they have been in darkness and in error, it is now our duty to "warn and teach them in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

In immediate connexion with the text, Paul speaks of the church as God's husbandry and as God's building; but observes of himself and fellow-labourers that, "according to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." We learn from this admonition, that in our efforts to increase the church we must take heed to build on the right foundation. If the mediatorial character and work of Christ are not made prominent in our ministrations as the ground of the sinner's pardon and acceptance with God, we shall deceive the people and impede the work which we profess to advance. A faithful exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel and of the authority of Christ over all Intelligent beings, is absolutely necessary, both to the conversion of sinners and the sta-

bility of the church. The interests of the church and the glory of Christ have never been, and never can be, advanced by teaching for doctrine, and enforcing as obligatory on the conscience, the commandments of men. The Lord will bear testimony to the word of his grace, but if we presume to set up standards and prescribe rules which he has not authorized, we may expect that he will demand, "Who gave you authority to do these things? Who hath required this at your hands?"

Error paved the way for the exercise of human authority in the kingdom of Christ, and human authority introduced a multitude of professors without faith and without holiness. The wise builder will adhere strictly to the plan given by the Lord of the temple, and will admit such materials only as accord with its character and design. It is not enough for him to be building, he is careful to build with "gold, silver, and precious stones;" that the church may be increased with materials that will add both to its strength and beauty. On the other hand it becomes us to guard against adopting terms for the admission of candidates which are neither in conformity with the example of the apostles nor the spirit of the Gospel. If some churches have been too lax, admitting any to their communion who profess to be Christians, although living in the violation of important Gospel precepts; other churches, I conceive, have demanded more than the Scriptures warrant, in requiring the personal attendance of candidates at a church-meeting and a history of their experience from the time of their conversion. The fact of their repentance towards God, faith in Christ, and consistency of character may, I apprehend, be ascertained in a manner less objectionable to the candidates and more satisfactory to the church than by such a process. Let us beware, lest in guarding against the entrance of improper characters, we assume the anti-scriptural principle, that, the New Testament is not sufficient for the government of the church, and, therefore, institute an ordeal at which the timid are frightened, and from which the intelligent are tempted to retire in surprise and sorrow.

It is to be feared, that many a Christian has been prevented joining the church on earth in consequence of these human devices, who would have been an ornament amongst its members and efficient in its service. It is high time, my brethren, to reform our discipline, and use every scriptural means to bring all who believe into the fellowship of saints, that they may enjoy the privileges conferred on them by their Lord, and unite with his subjects in promoting the prosperity of his kingdom.

There are numbers in most of our congregations who fear the Lord and in private walk with God; but some through timidity, and others through mistaken views on topics connected with a public profession, have not united themselves to the visible church; and there are others whose hearts the Lord has touched and who are beginning to "ask their way to Zion, with their faces thitherward." All these claim our particular notice, and the admonition of our Lord, "Feed my lambs," should regulate our conduct towards them. A deep sense of their unworthiness to be associated with the people of God may deter them from telling us of their convictions, and fears, and desires, and supplications to the Father of mercies. If we would know their state and do them good we must seek them out, we must visit them, instruct them, and pray with them.

Here I must observe that the pastor's hands may be greatly strengthened

his usefulness promoted, and the church extensively benefited by the kind and zealous co-operation of the members. Do not, dear brethren and sisters, leave every thing to be done by preaching and pastoral visits. They are indispensable to the spiritual edification of the people, but they do not include every thing that may be done for the glory of the Lord and the prosperity of the church. Every one should be ready to invite his neighbour to the house of God, to speak to him about the state of his soul and the one thing needful, and to encourage inquirers to follow on in seeking the knowledge which leads to eternal life. And the deacons and senior members especially should be ready to take up all difficult cases, and with the pastor, endeavour to remove objections and doubts, to strengthen faith and hope, and to promote the peace, unity, brotherly kindness, benevolence, and zeal of the members towards each other and the world.

“The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man for the advantage of all.” It follows, that every man is bound to exert himself, according to the grace bestowed on him, for the benefit both of his fellow Christians and the world. What a different scene our churches would exhibit, if ministers, deacons, and members, male and female, rich and poor, aged and young, were to exercise a righteous self-denial, and do all that grace would enable them to do for the spiritual improvement and increase of the churches! Our love to each other would be strengthened by being brought into regular and vigorous exercise. A more lively interest would be taken in our Sabbath-schools and various societies for the spread of the Gospel at home and abroad. A greater attention and spirit of inquiry would be excited in our respective neighbourhoods; and would lead, under that blessing which would not be withheld, to an extensive revival of religion, a pentecostal joy over the thousands that would be added to the churches.

It detracts nothing from the divine sovereignty and the work of the Spirit, that God should employ human agency in effecting his purposes of grace towards our world. Nay, the Apostle Paul assures us, that the glory of God is rendered the more conspicuous by this arrangement. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” The purity of the Gospel, its adaptation to the moral condition of man, its sublime revelations of the perfections and government of God, and the wonderful effects which have attended its promulgation, form a striking contrast to the depravity, ignorance, inconsistencies, and weakness apparent, to a greater or less extent, in all the human agency employed in its propagation. And the agents themselves, so far from arrogating the praise due to God, are filled with adoring gratitude, and acknowledge that, “by the grace of God they are what they are,” in the kingdom and service of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You, my brethren, who are looking forward to ministerial and pastoral labours will perceive the importance of correct views of the nature and constitution of the Christian church, the necessity of a healthy and vigorous piety in your own souls, and a persevering application to study, to prayer, to preaching, to visiting the people, and to promote the efficient operation of the local and general societies which are seeking to benefit our race for time and eternity. Consider well the character of the work before you, the variety and magnitude of those objects which will occupy your thought, your time, and all the energy you can bring to bear upon them. While you have opportunity lay in stores of know-

ledge, acquire habits of self-denial and industry, and covet earnestly the best gifts, that as "men of God you may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." You will then be able to say, "we are labourers together with God."

Secondly, **THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THE WORK UNDER CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE PROSECUTED.**

It is not only necessary that we should have correct views of the nature and importance of this work, but that we should also engage in it in a right spirit. It is possible to assume the office of a Christian minister and not preach the Gospel: and it is possible to preach the truth and yet to do it in a spirit that is calculated to disgust rather than edify, and excite division rather than promote harmony and spiritual improvement. The prayer of David ought to be the prayer of every man, but more especially of every Christian minister: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." What, then, is that spirit which every disciple of Christ, and more especially every preacher of the Gospel, ought to manifest? We ought to engage in the work of the Lord.

First, in *the spirit of humility.*

The consideration of the infinite disparity between ourselves, and the Being in whose service we are employed, his avowed hatred of every species of pride, and the momentous consequences attending our ministry, might be thought sufficient to induce the most unfeigned and habitual humility. The character also of Him whom we preach, who, although Lord of all, and in whom were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, took upon him the form of a servant, and was meek and lowly, humbling himself in obedience even unto the death of the cross, might be supposed to furnish sufficient motives to the cultivation of a spirit which he has sanctified and enforced by his own example. But, alas! such is our depravity that, even in the most sacred employment and with prospects of overwhelming solemnity, we are in danger of self-adulation and of glorying in ourselves instead of the Lord, to whom we are indebted for all our gifts and usefulness.

There are but few traits of character of more importance to a Christian minister than humility. It will essentially promote his usefulness, and this ought to be a sufficient inducement to its cultivation. So hateful is pride that, although it is often cherished and manifested, no one will plead its cause or is willing to be thought a proud man. Talent, learning, wealth, and power have a commanding influence, but pride excites pure aversion, unmingled disgust. On the other hand, humility will gain the esteem both of friends and strangers, and will dispose them to cultivate our friendship, and receive our instructions with candour.

Humility is necessary to peace of mind. A proud man is never satisfied, is generally irritable, and will be sure to irritate many with whom he must necessarily have habitual intercourse; and, if he be a minister, they will not fail to let him know and make him feel that such a spirit is glaringly inconsistent with his office and the duties which he daily inculcates. And when he retires from public view and communes with his own heart before God, when he considers his manifold imperfections of character and service, and anticipates appearing before his Lord to give an account of his stewardship, the recollection

tion of a proud look, haughty behaviour, and imperious language towards any of his fellow sinners, will fill his soul with shame, confusion, and remorse. The man who is of an humble spirit will escape this mental conflict and self-inflicted degradation. In short, the approbation of God, the example of our Lord and Master, the esteem of our fellow men, the profit of our hearers, the prosperity of the church, and the peace of our own consciences, combine to show the importance of humility in a Christian minister. "Be ye clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Secondly, They who are labourers together with God must be influenced by *love to God*.

In no department of life will there be vigorous and persevering exertion unless the heart be interested. This is particularly observable in religion. Many hear the word, give their assent to its truth, and do many things which would be good and acceptable, if the heart were right with God. But their perception and belief of the truth are too superficial and vague to affect the heart; and, therefore, their obedience is limited to the more prominent duties of religion, is without feeling, and of short continuance. It is the man who understands and believes the Gospel, as it respects the character and government of God, the depravity and guilt of man, the mediatory character and work of Christ, and the necessity of being renewed by his grace and justified through his righteousness, whose heart will be truly and fully interested in religion: and according to the extent of his knowledge and faith in the Gospel will be the degree of interest he will feel in the kingdom and service of our Lord Jesus Christ. Where the heart is fully with God and its affections set on the things which are above, there will be decision and fortitude: difficulties and dangers will not deter that Christian from following his Lord and striving to promote his glory both in the church and in the world.

It will be obvious that, if the heart must be interested to secure consistency and perseverance in the ordinary duties of religion, it must, if possible, be more deeply interested to secure efficiency in the discharge of ministerial and pastoral duties. The work itself is far more extensive and arduous, and, therefore, requires corresponding experience of the power of religion in the heart to induce close application and vigorous exertion. If we have not clear and scriptural views of the character and government of God, how shall we instruct the people in the fundamental principles of the Christian system? If our faith is not strong in the truth as it is in Jesus, with what consistency and effect shall we speak to others of the duty of believing in the Lord and of the advantages to be derived from implicit dependence on the promises of God? If we do not feel an ardent love to God, on account of his infinite perfections and what he has done for us in the works of nature and the economy of redemption, we shall exercise but little self-denial, make but little exertion for the spread of the Gospel, and be indifferent whether we succeed or not in seeking to reconcile the sinner to God through Jesus Christ, and to promote the increase and prosperity of his kingdom on earth. But if our love to God be fervent and steadfast we shall think no labours too great, no sacrifices too costly, in order to attain these important ends, and "make full proof of our ministry."

Thirdly, They who are labourers together with God must be influenced by *love to their fellow men*.

The holy Scriptures not only enforce the duty of love to man, but also adduce

as motives to its exercise the love of God to our world, and the example of the first labourers in the Christian field. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." If the apostles and their coadjutors had not been powerfully influenced by love to God and their fellow sinners, they would not have exposed themselves to the reproaches, the losses, and the bitter persecutions they endured whilst, as "labourers together with God," they, going from nation to nation, called upon all men to repent of their iniquities and believe in Jesus Christ for pardon and eternal life.

If we would succeed in our labours to any thing like the extent of the first preachers of the Gospel, we must emulate their devotedness to God and the salvation of men. We must enter more feelingly into the condition of sinners. We must look upon them as our dearest kindred and members of our own body. And if our most tender affection would be painfully excited by the thought of an endeared relative or child being cast into outer darkness, so should our hearts be grieved by witnessing the ignorance, the irreligion, the vice, the profaneness, the self-deceivings, and the presumption of the multitudes around us; knowing that "for all these things God will bring them into judgment." And if we ourselves are not willing to be cast into the bottomless pit, neither should we be willing that any of our fellow sinners should go into perdition; for we are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves. If he that witnesses the perpetration of a crime and does not attempt to prevent it, although he has an opportunity of doing so, is justly considered as participating in the guilt, how can we be innocent, if we witness the sinner violating the law of God, and thereby destroying himself, without using those means, which, under the divine blessing, would "save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins?" Let us awake, my brethren, to our responsibility, that we may be "clear from the blood of all men."

The full exercise of Christian love is equally necessary to the peace and prosperity of the church. Every deviation from this principle inflicts a painful and extensive injury on the mystical body of Christ. You cannot smite the surface of a lake without the effect extending to the whole of its waters. You cannot manifest coldness, resentment, or insult, even to an obscure person in a Christian community, without doing it to all those who are one with him in Christ. Such conduct interrupts the harmony of Christian fellowship and co-operation in the service of God: and is not this an injury to the whole church and to the whole world? Such conduct gives the enemies of the cross occasion to speak evil of the people and good ways of the Lord: and is not this an unspeakable injury to that cause which ought to be dearer to us than our lives? Such conduct grieves the Holy Spirit, who commands us to "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; and who can calculate the loss which is sustained by such an event? Therefore, "be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

We reject the authority of men in the kingdom of Christ, and glory in taking the New Testament as the only standard of our faith and rule of our worship. But, perhaps, we are sometimes in danger of committing the offence which we

profess to avoid. It is possible, that, in our zeal for what we consider to be conformity to the letter of the Scriptures, we may violate the spirit of holy love, forbearance, and unity which the Gospel breathes and is designed to nourish and perfect in the church. Whenever we do this, whether in prescribing unscriptural terms of fellowship, lording it over God's heritage, or in our behaviour towards each other in the social walks of life, we as truly usurp an antichristian authority as those who dictate laws and articles of faith, and enforce their observance by acts of parliament and other human devices. Let it also be remembered that all statements, inferences, and customs which violate the spirit of the Gospel, owe their existence to an abuse of the letter on which they profess to be founded. If we would convince the men of the world that we love them and are desirous to promote their everlasting welfare, we must set before them convincing proofs that we love one another and are one in the principles, the spirit, and the privileges of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children: and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."

Fourthly, they who are labourers together with God should prosecute their work with *holy zeal*.

If strong feeling and strenuous exertion are justifiable in any cause, they are in the work under consideration. This will be felt the more deeply when we consider the immortality and capacity of the human soul for improvement and happiness, deterioration and suffering; and that our labours are connected with the glory of God, and will affect the spiritual and everlasting interests, not only of those whom we personally address, but also through them of multitudes around and of future generations.

As our feelings towards persons and things are regulated by the estimate which we form concerning them, so the peculiarity of our spirit will be according to the nature of our predominant principles. How important, then, that we should understand and rightly estimate the genius of the Gospel and the nature and design of that work in which we are "labourers together with God." Through ignorance, error, or unbelief on these points, our hearts may be cold, when they ought to glow with spiritual and benevolent feeling; our language may be tame and feeble, when it ought to be firm and pointed; and our whole conduct careless and repulsive, when it ought to be formed after his example who esteemed it his meat to do his Father's will, and who went through the cities and villages, teaching the people in the temple, the synagogues, the streets, and the fields. Let us learn from the example of the Saviour the character and degree of zeal in which we should seek the conversion of sinners and the prosperity of his church. In the spirit of their Lord the apostles "went forth and preached every where," persuading Jews and Gentiles to embrace "the hope set before them;" they "laboured night and day;" they "endured hardships as good soldiers of Jesus Christ;" they "counted not their life dear unto themselves, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." Let us cultivate the same spirit, and labour in the same manner, and our success will bear some happy proportion to theirs. But let us imitate them and labour.

Fifthly, *In the spirit of prayer and of faith.*

We do not for a moment imagine that human agency alone is sufficient to attain the ends we have been contemplating, we know and feel that divine influence is absolutely necessary. Then let us pray, and pray more fervently, and more frequently, and be more united in prayer for the entire fulfilment of the promise, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." Ah! my brethren, "we have not, because we ask not, and we ask and receive not," because we do not "ask in faith," and follow up our prayers by strenuous exertions to attain the things for which we supplicate. We pray and forget our prayers. We act as though we thought it would be too much to expect them to be answered: and in too many instances it would, for they are offered without heart and without faith; and "let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." We are not straitened in the Lord, but in ourselves. Our limited views, our weak faith, our carnal and selfish policy are the barriers which prevent our progress and usefulness. If we were more sincere, more devotional, and more zealous, the Gospel would be preached with "the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," to the dense and profligate inhabitants of the lanes, the alleys, and the courts of our large cities; to the ignorant and irreligious people in our neglected villages; and to the Jews and Gentiles of every nation under heaven.

If God has provided means suited to the mental and moral condition of man, adapted to convey spiritual knowledge to the mind and produce contrition in the heart; if he has commanded us to apply these means and is daily giving us opportunities of doing it; and if he has, moreover, promised to be "with us always," and that his word "shall not return unto him void; but shall accomplish that which he pleaseth, and prosper in the thing whereto he sent it;" are we not warranted to expect the conversion of multitudes, the universal spread and triumph of the Gospel, a millennium of spiritual prosperity to the church, when the gracious promise shall be fulfilled, "The Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising?" Is it too much to expect that God will be faithful? "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" He declares, "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

"O for a strong, a lasting faith,  
To credit what the Almighty saith!"

Let ministers and every member of our churches act on the principles which have engaged our attention this evening, and "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

May the Lord give to you, my brethren, who are pursuing a course of preparatory studies, "understanding in all things;" that you may become able ministers of the New Testament, and hereafter "feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready-mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock:" and "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."



Allow me, my Christian friends, to commend to your notice and patronage the Baptist College at Stepney, whose interests have brought us together this evening. It presents to you a medium through which you may become "labourers together with God." In answer to the prayers of the churches for more labourers in the Gospel field, the Lord has raised up these young men and endued them with gifts suited to the ministry. But before they enter on its more stated and important duties it is desirable that their minds should be stored with suitable knowledge, and that they should be trained to those habits which will conduce to their future usefulness. By supporting the Institution which affords them leisure and most efficient aid in prosecuting their various and important studies, you become labourers with them in the service of the Lord, and the churches and the world will reap the fruit of your labour.

When a church is bereaved of its pastor, it is desirous of obtaining an able minister; a man whose talents, respectable attainments, and active, prudent habits promise well for the people over whom he is to preside. Then let every church contribute towards the encouragement and education of pious and suitable young men, who may hereafter occupy your pulpits, break unto you the bread of life, and prove amongst you "good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

## THE LORD THE PORTION OF HIS PEOPLE.

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REV. T. DALE, A.M.

ST. BRIDE'S CHURCH, FLEET STREET, JULY 3, 1836.

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"The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot."

PSALM xvi. 5.

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THERE are two things intimately connected with each other, and bearing much upon ourselves, which can neither be expressed nor conceived—the extent of human misery, and the depth of human sin. As to the former, we are told in Scripture, and the declaration is continually verified by experience, that the heart knoweth its own bitterness: as to the latter we are assured—and here also it will be a happy thing if it be experience does not justify the assertion—that "many imagine wickedness, and pursue it; every one in the secret of his heart."

Now it would be well for the best interests of the human race if the connexion between sin and misery were more generally discerned, and more practically understood; if those who suffer in mind, in body, or estate, in their circumstances, in their connexions, or in their affections, would calmly and deliberately trace how large a portion of their sorrows ought to be ascribed to their own neglect of duty, to their own unwatchfulness against sin, to their own laxity of Christian principle in their intercourse with others, and to the total absence of it perhaps in the dealings of others with them. It may be truly said, however paradoxical the assertion may appear to some, that the world is held under the iron sway of misery in exact proportion as it is eager in the pursuit of happiness. But the solution of the seeming paradox is as simple as it is obvious: it is, that men perversely seek happiness in paths that lead to misery. They seek it in the accumulation of wealth, in the dissipation of pleasure, in the gratification of vanity or ambition: and in doing this they take into consideration a part only, and that much the smaller part, of the necessities of man. They provide for the present at the expense of the future, not duly considering that a day will certainly arrive when they will reap as they have sown, and gather as they have strawed.

Now the subject on which we are to meditate this day will put us in direct contrast with the gloomy and revolting picture that must be drawn of the end of such by those who speak the truth. It calls us not to measure the extent of human misery, so much as to look at the mercy of God to all them who fear him, which is as high as heaven is above the earth, and as wide as from the east to the west. It calls us not to let down line and plummet into the abyss of human depravity, but to look upon an exhaustless and perennial spring of consolation—the river that maketh glad the city of God, and of which we may drink for ever. It calls us not to look on the dying agonies, and listen to the

self-upbraidings of those who have chosen wrong ; but to describe the happy condition of those who have chosen right, to dwell on their present privileges, their future anticipations, their enjoyment of peace, comparative peace on earth—the prospect of an enduring and perfect peace in heaven. Yes—taking man as he is, a being of affection as well as of appetites, of feelings as well as passions—of moral sensibilities and social sympathies, as well as of sensual indulgences and sordid interests—of high and expansive capacities, as well as tendencies to grovel in the mire of ignorance and impurity ; taking man as he is—the heir of immortality, though the child of clay—and formed for higher destinies though born in sin and moulded in dust—we fearlessly assert, and undertake to establish the assertion, that they only are happy who can adopt for their own the declaration of the Psalmist, “ The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup : thou maintainest my lot : ” and such only will be able to say, “ The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage.”

We shall consider, first, the character here described, and secondly, the blessing here affirmed : and God grant that there may be many present who will feel themselves described and blessed this day !

Much, very much, is implied in the emphatical clause, “ The Lord is the portion of my inheritance.” It conveys to us the idea that God is to the man who can say this from the heart what God ever ought to be—first : he is recognized, as he ever should be, in his real character—sovereign and supreme : all is felt to be from him—all that is enjoyed here or expected hereafter is resolved alike into his infinite and unmerited bounty : he is acknowledged and felt in all. The man thus described not only knows that God has made him, and that he is the God who preserves him, but believes that God redeems him, and is persuaded that the future may be safely trusted where the present is so well supplied.

Here, then, is the important point of the comparison (O that your minds may rest upon it !) between those who serve the Lord and those who serve him not. As to this world, all paths, even of apparent happiness, are just as open to the believer as to the man of the world ; all instruments and appliances of happiness are bestowed on him in equal abundance with them : affluence or competence, reputation and esteem, he may possess as well as they : the resources of a well-stored intellect, the gratification of cultivated tastes, the bounties and the beauties of creation are spread forth in equal prodigality and beneficence for him : and he may range through the trackless regions of the imaginative world. For him those kindred hearts, those social sympathies, that kindness of friendly intercourse which contribute to make up the sum of human happiness, may exist, not only in an equal, but most generally in a superior, degree as compared with others, because of the tendency of his principles to generate and to cherish them.

Thus far therefore the influence may at least be held in equipoise : but in all and above all that he occupies (for he *owns* nothing) the believer can say “ The Lord is the portion of my inheritance : ” and this is the portion and the only portion that cannot fail. The old man who showed such kindness to David when he fled with his army from the face of his son Absalom, and who was, in the emphatic language of Scripture, “ a very great man,” portrayed

most powerfully the intrinsic impotence of all worldly goods to constitute lasting happiness, by the very terms in which he declines the request of David to accompany him to Jerusalem—"How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day four-score years old; and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?" We too will hope that this benevolent old man was possessed of a richer, and a brighter, and a more enduring portion than his flocks and his herds, his storehouses and his granaries; a portion to be realized in the solitudes of Mahanaim, where he dwelt, as well as within the precincts of the holy city, or the sacred halls of the regal dwelling. But his declining forms the most expressive comment on all earthly sources of happiness, and suggests the obvious consideration—What a wretched and pitiful creature would this rich and great old man have appeared if he had received all his portion in this life, if there had been no stay for his declining life, no prospect of an inheritance beyond the grave!

Now it is not only that old age must, by the very condition of human existence, bring with it, as to all worldly things however beloved, and as to all distinctions however much coveted, and as to all persons however tender and beloved, a comparative deadness and incapacity of enjoyment. We are at all times on very weak warning, perhaps without any, liable to be placed in the same condition with those in fast declining years. The evil days may be at hand; the minutes may be drawing nigh when we shall say we have no pleasure in them, when there will be no pleasure in all we have enjoyed under the sun. At this very moment there are many living—and alas! some dying instances, around the temple wherein we are professing to worship God, that sickness anticipates old age, and that the world, with all it contains, are inferior to that world for which all of you are tending.

But the man who can adopt the sentiment of my text—who, in the midst of his health and strength, has made the only provision for the days of languor, of infirmity, of exhaustion, of weariness of spirit—the man who has returned to God through the way opened in Christ, and has cast all his care on his heavenly Father, who careth for him—that man may delight himself safely, since he delights himself temporarily, in all that God has given him; because, so far as concerns the treasure that is above all price, he is exposed to no danger, and is placed beyond all risk of shame. "This God," said the Psalmist, "is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death:" and himself added, "I am the Lord; I change not; therefore ye sons of men are not consumed." O what an unutterable benefit in the world, which is full of sudden and disastrous visitation, to stay the soul upon One who can, and who will, keep it in perfect peace—in whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning—One whose counsel will stand, and he will do all his pleasure; while his pleasure is the salvation of his people, and his counsel that all things shall work together for the good of those who love him.

But I should trespass needlessly on your time were I to demonstrate at full length how preferable is the condition of the man who has God for his portion, to those who "hasten after another God"—those whose sorrows shall be multiplied, while as his portion the blessing is ensured. Your time may be better

employed in considering, first, whether the Lord is the portion of your inheritance, and if not, by what means he may be entreated and prevailed upon to become so.

Now there is, we know, on authority which cannot mislead us, one way, and only one, of coming to God. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh to the Father but by me." A sense of unworthiness, therefore, a consciousness of insufficiency, a thorough persuasion that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves, a full conviction that we have not, and cannot have, in the incalculable interests of the future, any portion in this world—all these may be regarded as essential in taking the first step towards God: and one means of attaining these, if we have not yet attained them, is, an examination of our wants as arising out of the experience of the past; and another is, a comparison of the ascertained wants of others with those which will one day be our own. But do we know of none whose prospects of happiness in this world are for ever blighted—none who are descending into the grave by a protracted malady? Do we know of none who are brought down to the tomb in the meridian of strength and vigour, in whom the restlessness of the body is but too true an index of the disquietude of the soul? Do we know none who feel at this moment (God preserve you from it!) that they have turned away opportunities which will never return, that they are now plunged deep into sorrow, and trembling on the very verge of judgment without any hope of an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous? Do you know of any such? It is not because there is none such to be found like to it: therefore while you have the means in your power, never be as they. And so far as your own consciousness is concerned you have the power: God is reconciled to you: you can seek him, you can turn to him; you can determine that from this hour God shall be first; you can resolve thus, he aiding you in those means of grace which he will bless because he has ordained them. We are all here in his sanctuary; that is much: we come here, with few exceptions I trust, from a home which had previously witnessed our prostration in the privacy of prayer. If these are our habits, the Lord is already the portion of our inheritance; for the man who has learned to pray from the heart has been brought home to God. O then, let him be the portion of our hope! Let us not decline the sacred pledge of Christ's brotherhood, and of our membership with each other. Let us take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord. This, if done rightly, in fervent love, with humble faith, and hearty desire, will bind us all, as by a heaven-formed band, into one body of vital and practical religion. The natural impulses, and affections, and desires, sanctified by the Spirit of our God, into one character of holiness, rightly felt and applied, imports consistency with our religion, and brings us in the terms of the blessing, "Thou maintainest my lot."

It is evident from these words that the distinctive feature of the blessing intended by our text, is *perpetuity*. The "lot" of the believer, is a lot to be "maintained:" whether he is tossed for a time on a sea of trouble; or whether, bereft of all earthly ties and all appearances of comfort, he is walking through life as through a wilderness; or whether he is treading the dark valley of the shadow of death, concerning which the Psalmist has said, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art

with me ; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me :” the *rod* and the *staff* are both symbols of perpetuity.

Now it is this attribute which cannot be predicated or believed of any worldly lot. There are *many* in which it may be *desired*—there are *none* in which it may be *attained*. Riches may be honourably acquired or transmitted to their possessors through a long line of distinguished ancestors ; the accumulation of them may be without remembrance of iniquity, and the expenditure without imputation of unfaithfulness ; and thus regarded and enjoyed we acknowledge them to be a good : but they do not the less make to themselves wings and flee away like an eagle towards heaven ; they do not the less leave behind them, if we may trust the experience of one who occupied a throne, and expressed it from the ground of his heart, when he looked on all the works of his hands, and all the labour he had laboured to do—they would not the less leave behind them “vanity and vexation of spirit.” We have no ground for charging Solomon with evil in the acquirement or the distribution of his wealth : it was only upholding the power of his kingdom, that he should make him great houses, and plant vineyards, and make gardens and orchards, and plant in them all kinds of fruits and make pools of water to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees : it was only becoming his situation and years, ascending the throne in manhood immature, that he should gather silver and gold, that he should delight himself in the melody of music, and that whatever his eyes desired he should not keep from them. But during the whole time, he adds, his wisdom remained with him. But what is the end ? he after all demands. “What hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured, under the sun ? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief ; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night.” Ah, brethren ! the portion of this world’s goods is here taken at the amplest and the highest, and with the least of perversion in the use ; and yet were his days sorrows, and his heart took no rest. What can bring peace to the spirit but the lot that is maintained of God ? For this lot is supported by two columns that can sustain the weight of an imperishable soul ; the *wisdom* of God that dispenses to the necessities of his people, and the *power* of God which is able to provide for them. And we pass beyond the Psalmist in the range of our knowledge, and therefore ought to equal him in the strength of our confidence where we know that both attributes are ministered by Christ—by One not only acquainted with the weakness of our infirmities, but touched with the feeling of them—One who compassionates while he raises up the fallen—One who himself having suffered being tempted, is able also to succour them who are tempted. Hence is Christ to us, declares the Apostle, “the power of God and the wisdom of God.” Christ is the lot of the believer, and in Christ God ; and God in Christ is life, and liberty, and light—all that can be desired here, all that can be enjoyed hereafter. “Who have I in heaven but thee ?” asked the Psalmist : “and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with thee.” A sentiment well worthy to be responded to by the believer in the Gospel salvation, who has in Christ all the treasures of wisdom ; to whom he is “made wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption ;” and having once become so continues so for ever ; for “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

It may indeed be objected, we know, by the man who seeks happiness in mere worldly pleasures, that this is matter of opinion and of faith ; that we can

know no more than he does what shall be hereafter; and that it is we who are "walking in a vain show," while we are pursuing that of which we can have no sensible demonstration that it has ever been attained. But passing over the first fact, that sensible demonstration was attained by those who saw Elias and Moses in glory talking with Jesus, we point at the dissatisfaction of those who confine their views to this world, and disregard or disparage the lot of God's people. This is matter not of opinion but of *fact*. Whenever a night is spent by such in solitude, it is spent for the most part in misery; the heart taketh no rest; and that which it appears to take is not the slumber or the temperate pulse of the healthy frame, but the stupefaction of the mental opiate. As soon as reflection forces itself on those who live without God in the world—and they can no more exclude it than they can shut out the light of the sun—their experience may be described in the words of the sacred writer, "When I consider I am afraid of thee." Even as to *this* world they have the less valuable and substantial part; they cannot enjoy what they have, from the fear of losing it: while on the contrary, the servant of God derives from that which he possesses all the happiness it is calculated to yield, because he knows that when every thing is withdrawn it will be replaced by that which is far more precious and abiding. The apostle might therefore well say that godliness will profit in both worlds, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come: for it not only evaporates that fear of the future which is, after all, the most intolerable ingredient in the cup of life; but it enhances the zest of every legitimate enjoyment. It takes away nothing we could justly regret to lose; and that which it imparts is in itself incalculable gain.

It is so in *society* as well as in solitude. In society the lot maintained by God is far better, for there is cheerfulness of converse, the interchange of kindly feeling, confidence, and love; the hearts of families drawn towards each other, because their affections meet in a common centre, which is God. There is the temperate indulgence of those pleasures, which were designed in their satisfying to excite a pleasurable sensation. There is all of taste that does not corrupt, and all of science and literature that does not vitiate or inflame. And these domestic joys would be ill exchanged for the tumult of the gay carousal, in which prodigality, and luxury, and systematic intemperance have their display, and he is the hero who can pour forth ribaldry with the greatest volubility, or drink to the furthest point of intoxication. And these would be ill exchanged for the lighter and more mixed assemblages, where vanity and bold demeanour go hand in hand; and the decorations of dress, while they display a form and symmetry, too often sparkle over a mind that is all wrath, and a heart that is all stain. Even in *society*, I say, God's people have the better lot, for their enjoyments bring no painful remembrances after them. But in *solitude*—solitude, which, after all, must constitute much of life—solitude that the man of pleasure dreads, that the man of interest hates—that the man who is prayerless, and, therefore, godless, would often avoid, for the companionship of the lowest and most degraded of his kind—in *solitude*, how incalculable the lot that is maintained by God. Whenever the believer is left alone, he may say, "I am not alone, for the Father is with me." If he retire from the world, it is that he may meditate undisturbed on God. If sleep flee from his eyes, and slumber from his eyelids, yet his reins are "instructed in the night season;" he blesseth God who "giveth songs in the night." If death arrives, it is death disarmed

of his terrors, divested of his sting. Ignorance of the future does not generate apprehension in the believer in Christ Jesus, for he can take to himself all the comfort condensed in that memorable assurance of the apostle—and it is a comfort which will extend itself through all eternity—“ Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.”

This, then, beloved brethren, is the lot which, as one put in trust for your souls, I would desire for all of you (O, surely, you will desire it for yourselves!)—it is the lot of those who fear and love God. Such a lot will not only be a source of comfort, and of joy and peace through life ; but it will be a lot in which you will stand firm and sure at the end of your days. He who maintains it for you *here*, will maintain it in you *for ever*. It will rise in value and estimation in proportion as all others must sink. Where the man of this world loses every thing (and he must lose every thing at death) you would, were his grovelling conclusions true, lose nothing : but if man be, as we believe, a living soul—a soul that should endure as long as the divine essence, which breathes into man’s nostrils the breath of life—then you will have every thing to gain. There cannot be, on principles even of worldly policy, a moment’s comparison between the two lots. Men are not religious only because they will not reflect : Reason may herself be led to decide, except she be perverted by sophistry, blinded by vanity, or stupified by excesses. God’s word has told us, that the height of presumption is the profession of no religion ; but Reason will herself tell us, that the height of all moral folly is the profession of religion without the practice of it. Happy, then, you, who endeavour to combine both ! You may for a time seem to be the ridicule, but in the end, you shall be the envy, of the world. Happy you, who will be found, where duty dictates, avowing the Lord for your inheritance ; acknowledging the benefits he has bestowed, and which none can bestow but he ; taking the cup of salvation, and calling on his name ! Happy you, who have made the most effectual preparation for the vicissitudes of life, and for the fearful contingencies of death ; taking refuge, while you may, beneath the wing of the Omnipotent ; trusting to Him who is mighty to save. Wisdom will, in the great day of retribution, be justified of all her children : she will be justified of *you* ; nay, she is *already* so, unless it can be denied that we are all in rapid advance towards the three last things, of which I entreat you to think this day—death, judgment, and eternity. Now, to triumph in death, to stand clear in judgment, to abide in bliss throughout eternity, one thing is needful, and but one, and that one is Christ : Christ on the lip—confession ; Christ in the life—holiness ; Christ in the heart—love. O happy you, who, having Christ, have all !

But you are only a portion : and I would turn myself to each of the multitude here assembled—to each who will retire, as well as to each who will remain—I would turn to each, and ask, Is Christ thus yours ? Does God thus maintain your lot ? O, if he do not maintain it for you, consider, I entreat you, that the hour of trial, come when it may—and there are those among you, whom death has already marked—consider how you will maintain it for yourselves, if, throughout eternity, the Lord is not the portion of your inheritance. Ask, and answer for yourselves, the question—it will drive you at once to Christ—“ What will my portion be ?”



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